PREFACE

The work of SAIER forms an integral whole within the experiment of Auroville. The experiment itself is an attempt to work out, give content and practical shape to the vision of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother on the future evolution of humanity.

SAIER aims to serve as an institution for new experiments and research in integral education within Auroville, ultimately an endeavour towards human unity. Being located in the International Township of Auroville and situated adjacent to several villages, SAIER possesses unique potential for research and experimentation in education.

SAIER was founded in 1984 to coordinate and further develop the educational research in Auroville. Presently there are about 200 researchers working under the institute’s umbrella, organized in research teams around the following areas:

Experiments in objectives, contents and methods of a new system of education
Experiments in fine arts
Experiments in environment and village extension work
Experiments in physical education
Research in special themes such as Indian culture, evolution and Savitri

The institute is composed of a number of autonomous research units, each of which functions in a democratic style of internal organization. The administrative work of the Institute is being coordinated from a central office situated at Bharat Nivas. The construction of the new building of SAIER Office will be completed this year in the administrative area of Auroville.

All the units under SAIER are grouped into 7 centres which carry out research and related activities. The following seven centres of SAIER cover different aspects of the Auroville experiment:

1. Centre of Educational Research
2. Centre of Studies in Sri Aurobindo and the Mother
3. Centre of East, West, and Human Unity
4. Centre of Indian Culture
5. Centre of Arts, Crafts and Technologies
6. Centre of Man, Nature and Environment
7. Centre of Physical Education and Perfection of the Body

Volume 1 of this Annual Report contains only the reports of the Auroville schools and the outreach schools, along with educational projects under the Centre of Educational Research. The rest is available in Volume 2.
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CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

Auroville Schools
Our aim is to offer the small children of Auroville a safe and harmonious atmosphere for being, exploring and learning. The parents can find in the pre crèche a supportive place to meet and share the experience about raising their children.

The pre crèche is now well established with its specific atmosphere. It is on a never ending process of evolution as different teachers and parents contribute, sharing their various points of view on raising children. Our growth since the beginning has been very much according to the needs and the attitudes expressed by the community and the Mother for child care in Auroville.

**Activities:**

We offer 2 groups - Toddlers Group and Babies Group.

**TODDLERS GROUP:**

This year we had the same number of kids as last year with 22 children between one and one and a half years old. This is the group of children who come every day and stay without their parents.

Given our experience from previous years, we took great care to help the children settle in gently, feel safe and be loved, get used to the team and the place, and slowly learn to be separated, in a harmonious way, from their parents. Due to their tender age, we tried to keep a good balance between free play and organized activities, offering a flexible structure, but mostly following and channelling the flows of their energy.

We provided enough time and space for the children to choose by themselves the area of interest and to explore and understand themselves and each other. They were supported gradually to learn to follow some basic discipline and simple rules. The atmosphere in the pre crèche is suitable to stimulating their interest and helps to overcome the tamsic nature in some of them; overall the children feel happily involved in the play and in the interaction with each other. Most of the kids are flowering joyfully and have made a big progress and it was only sad to see them leave at the end of their term when they were about to have made special
AUROVILLE SCHOOLS

relationships with the teachers and among their fellow classmates.

This year we were not able to explore too many physical activities or spend more time with nature due to our surroundings having been disturbed by the Thane Cyclone last December. But we tried our best to do small activities as much as possible within our compound. We tried taking the children to a few outings to Dehashakthi sports ground but this did not seem to work as most of the trees had fallen and the climate was too hot so we decided to keep our physical activities limited to the pre crèche premises.

But our regular activities continued to improve given our input from our previous experience over the last thirteen years. The day began with a circle where the child learns concentration. In this quiet sitting, a candle is repeatedly lit which each child blows out in turn and after this, they are guided towards an activity, or are free to explore their own field of interest. The children were also helped in various activities of daily life, including collective sharing, cleanliness, eating together, singing etc. Sometimes, parents got more involved in organizing various activities of their choice to encourage greater togetherness and fun for their children.

BABIES GROUP:

As the population of Auroville is growing we have had a sudden boom in the arrival of babies. We received admission requests for a total of 35 children from 8 months old to one and a half years old with their parents, of many different nationalities. As the group size was bigger (with an average of 25 children attending daily) and the place being small we had to manage ourselves with limited activities until our new buildings are ready next year.

Teachers do much to guide and suggest to parents the positive lines of bringing up children. And this year we had a volunteer from Germany for three months who had studied on babies and their requirements. She helped establish a very important connection between parents-teachers. Parents of both groups were happy that the pre crèche offered their children the space to explore and also reported positive changes in the characters of their children due to the enriching and supportive environment.

Highlights:

As usual we celebrated creatively with the children some special days - birthdays, Deepavali, Ganesh birthday, Christmas with parents, Pongal, Auroville’s Birthday and the last day of school.

With the introduction of lunch from last year the kids are enjoying their stay even more. And the parents come to pick their children happily after comfortably finishing their work.

We had expected to find the pre crèche in a state of disaster after the cyclone hit as the building construction is of a temporary nature but with the blessings of the Mother our buildings were lucky to survive with minor damage which was then repaired very soon with the help of the Auroville cyclone relief team.

New Challenges:

Together with SAIIER we have now received our first instalment for the new building. After going through a hard time with our own planning team we have now finally started constructing the new pre crèche. Our new building is now located near the entrance of Deepanam School and right behind the Matrimandir. We are blessed with such a nice surrounding. We are grateful to SAIIER for their dedicated effort towards realizing our project and making the dream of most of our teachers true at a time when the population of Auroville is growing at a fast rate.

With the possibility of admitting around 30 kids for this year we are left with a shortage of space and staff. With the new building hopefully to be completed by middle of 2013 and with Aurovilians willing to help and with an additional teacher we are sure to face the new challenges
and move ahead.

**Goals and Achievements:**

The Pre crèche aims to provide an integral environment for parents and children of different nationalities to interact in a healthy and supported way. With the continued growth of the community, the pre crèche remains committed to a multi-cultural environment where different people from different backgrounds really get a chance to know and understand one another.

This is of course not always easy, but an important part of our success as a school is to encourage a healthy interaction of all our children from a very young age. It is our sincere hope that these precious first impressions of school, for many their first exposure to the larger Auroville community, will be the first step in exploring the wonderful riches Auroville has to offer.

**School statistics:**

Number of children: Toddlers: 22 Babies: 35
Number of teachers: 5 full-time; 1 part-time & 2 volunteers.
AHA! KINDERGARTEN

School Statistics:

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In July 2011, Aha! Kindergarten started its first year, with 6 children from Auroville between 3 to 6 years of age. This was preceded by a few months of preparatory work - meetings with the Auroville School Board and SAIIER, streamlining our admission process, holding discussions with prospective parents and preparing the space and material to welcome the children.

Objectives:

Inspired by the vision and principles of Integral Education, the objectives of Aha! are outlined as follows:

a) To create a facilitating environment for children where they feel free to explore, interact, discover and develop faculties and parts of their being.

b) To encourage parent participation in creating such an environment and facilitation so that there is a continuum established between the home and the school.

c) To initiate a process of self-discovery and insight, and kindle the active imagination of the being towards knowledge.

Underlying this aim and objective is the belief that all children have within themselves both the knowledge and the aspiration to manifest, in the deepest sense, the being that they are evolving into. As adults, our work is to ensure that this playful experience of theirs continues unimpeded by rigid patterns. We see the facilitator’s role as akin to that of a farmer who, in tending to a planted seed, knows that he can provide the conditions for growth but cannot teach the seed how to grow and what to become.

Throughout the school year, we held regular study circles with parents and teachers in order to build a harmonious relationship and an understanding of the ideals and objectives of education in early childhood. This aided in preparing ourselves to understand and address effectively the needs of children.

The content of the program that we developed in the year focussed on

- Refining the senses
- Strengthening the fine and gross motor skills
- Providing enriching activities for physical and mental development, while accommodating individualized needs of each child
- Providing freedom to children in their explorations from where they gradually take their own learning responsibility
- Creating an atmosphere where children can socialize with trust and experience the joy of being together
- Creating a bridge between the home and the school
1. There was a blend of spontaneity and guidance in activities such as art, craft, games, clay, and reading. In order to stimulate make-believe play and creativity the children were provided with a diversity of material that did not lend itself to any one solution. As a team we focused on collecting and making material that was open-ended and had as many in-built degrees of freedom as possible - seeds, blocks, shaped pieces of cardboard, beads, tissue paper spools, cylinders, empty camera roll containers, malleable electrical cable, life-size electrical and plumbing material, bolts, nuts, string, rope, pebbles, shells, etc. Through explorations with these materials, children learned to use their own active imaginations to extract from the material their various obvious and hidden facets. All play thus became creative in very active ways.

2. Spending time in the playground was enjoyable for children and an essential part of physical and vital development. Our playground was constructed by our team with the help of volunteers and the children themselves. The children therefore had a very strong sense of ownership over their play area. Used tyres, ropes, ladders, fallen logs, donated bamboo etc were used in creative and unique ways to build strength, balance and body awareness. Following the cyclone, fallen logs were collected and re-imagined into an igloo. Watching how material can be recycled from natural and industrial sources has allowed the children to think differently about their environment. Any object can have a multiplicity of uses and outcomes. Waste is seldom waste.
3. To bring home the idea that our lives are connected intimately with the workings of Nature, the adults and children at Aha! spent substantial time in creating and maintaining our own kitchen garden. Harvest from this garden was then cooked and eaten communally. Additionally, we went on trips to farms in Auroville where we involved ourselves in larger scale farming activities. An instance of such a trip was to participate in the early morning working hours in the fields to harvest a crop of peanuts. This was followed by cleaning and preparing the harvest for a snack. Such an experience engaged children’s faculties in a holistic manner.

4. To build a solid awareness of the diversity of life in our surroundings we spent time on walks through the woods of Auroville picking up seeds and leaves, identifying and eating wild edible berries, testing our bodies against natural physical formations, climbing, building bridges, learning to listen to the sounds of birds and the wind. In addition to these almost daily activities we made it a point to visit a number of AV forest communities exposing ourselves to the power and silence of the wild while learning essential lessons about the need to regenerate our natural environment and about setting lifestyle limits.

5. Craft-work and motor-skill work was an integral part of each day’s activity. Through craft, the children have learned to use scissors, glue, staplers, paint, paper and a variety of collected objects to create forms and develop their motor skills. Craft at Aha! is essentially free-form. Children are expected to learn more controlled form-making through observation of the facilitator. They are never helped to make something pre-conceived. Amazingly, many of the children have learned to make such controlled form and have understood underlying concepts of form-making by observation and absorption and have gone on to make their own versions of these forms that they then have used in other activities of their interest such as drama or architecture. Towards the end of the year craft-making slowly led towards the understanding of patterns, geometry and arithmetic.
6. One of the major thrust areas for Aha! has been bridge-building between the home and the school. Parents are encouraged to learn about and engage in discussions with the team about integral philosophy as we see it. Parents are deeply involved in snack-making, washing, arranging, reading, building, walking, and playing with the children. All this has allowed the children to see Aha! as an extension of home and thus they are comfortable in the space. Sensitive children have felt supported and out-going children have experienced a space for self-expression. Adopting the Aha! approach and taking that approach home has benefited both the parents and children allowing the adults and children to progress through daily challenges into relationships of mutual respect.

It has been a process of growth and learning for parents and facilitators as well. All contributed their time and energy and took responsibility for the functioning and development of the kindergarten.

**Outcomes**

1. The children, parents and facilitators were able to build a relation of trust and cooperation.
2. The children were enthusiastic about coming to Aha!
3. They developed self-confidence and the capacity to express themselves.
4. Children benefited from being in a mixed age group.
5. Six children were a part of the program for the whole year and 3 children participated for 2 terms.
6. Two new teachers joined in the second term and received training. They will continue to work in the coming school year.
7. Reclamation and repair of an old building and arranging it suitably for children.
8. Parents and the entire team came together cohesively to help run the kindergarten.

Challenges:

We faced some significant challenges with respect to our infrastructure, for example, shortage of furniture and storage space, a non-permanent structure which needs regular maintenance, failing plumbing and electrical connections, and water shortage.
KINDERGARTEN

Quiet Room

This is an activity included since a few years in the kindergarten curriculum. Children of any age (3 plus to 6 plus) participate in it. They come two at a time, or sometimes only one, while the other children are following the regular class. The special feature of this activity is the quiet, focused relaxing atmosphere, in which the child can feel safe and protected. There are different materials and different proposals offered from which the children can choose. The child is free to select the activity or the game that he/she likes more and is free to change at any time. Usually, when the child is new to this activity, it takes two or three sessions to get accustomed to the setting and atmosphere, but after this everyone just enjoys and looks forward to coming again and again. By going two at a time everybody in the group gets a chance to go to the quiet room, but sometimes, priority is given to some children who seem to need it the most.

Some activities we do:

- Outdoor walk, where they can observe the nature around them and then talk or draw about what they just experienced.
- Practice of fine motor coordination by picking up with a spoon some balls which are floating in a bucket with water and transferring them into another bucket.
- Juggling with 2 lemons from hand to hand and counting how many times they manage to do so.
- Keeping balance, while rolling on a wide wooden skating board on their bellies, knees or upright on their feet.
- Using their breath to keep a balloon flying in the air without letting it fall.
- Acting out of a story that has just been read to them.

Orange Group (3 ½ to4 ½)

A special challenge: two children with speech problems

This year we had two children in our class who needed special care because of their speech problem. Both can hear, but they do not speak much. They were helped by a speech therapist who came twice a week to the kindergarten.

Our main work was to understand them through facial expression and body language, and to involve them so that they did not feel excluded from the group. When needed the entire group helped so as not to make them feel different. Our greatest effort was to not bring down the level of the whole group, but instead to push these two, to try to keep up with the level of the group.

Project about animals

During this full year we worked on domestic and wild animals because we realized that the children are confused between the two categories.

We started with the animals living on the farm which children are used to see in their daily life. We worked on the English and Tamil names. We described the shape of their body, the kind of food they eat and how they can be helpful to us.

Each child got one paper animal to decorate with natural materials like seeds, wool, cotton, feathers, rice and dal. In the meanwhile one of the teachers painted the big board that we have in the classroom with a landscape with hills, fields, fence, pond and trees. Then the children prepared a big tree with branches made with the outline of their arm and hand, and when the farm animals were ready they placed them in the painted landscape in the right location (horses inside the fence, ducks in the pond etc).
AUROVILLE SCHOOLS

After Christmas we started to work on wild animals, especially the ones who live in the jungle. Some children had been to the zoo and they were confused about some wild animals which they thought also live in Auroville. We told them stories about the jungle; we did games to teach the different sounds of the animals; we worked on the difference between herbivores and carnivores, letting them understand that there are animals that eat other animals because it is in their own nature.

Then we prepared the shape of some of the most important animals of the jungle and each child got one to color. In the meanwhile we removed the farm animals and our board changed into a jungle landscape with many bushes, rocks and a beautiful sunset. Once again children placed the animals in the right spot (crocodile near the water, lion on the rock etc.)

Finally, at the end of the year we removed the animals and our landscape was transformed into ‘Auroville’. The children prepared a big round and golden shape for the Matrimandir and each child made a collage of his/her house with different materials (wood, paper, and fabric). We put the Matrimandir at the centre and, as on a map, every child put their house in its spot in their community.

Yellow Group (2 ½ to 3 ½)

First approach to the children’s discovery of their own voice.

First exercise:

Sitting all together in a circle, the children say their name in a normal tone of voice. Once the children are able to do this properly, they learn how to say their names in different tones of the voice.

- low voice
- high voice
- modulating the voice (Joshuuuaaa)
- singing the name
- shouting the name
- whispering the name
- divide the name into syllables (Jo-shu-a)

Second exercise:

Modulating vowels:

- making the vowels longer
- showing the children different movements of the mouth while modulating the vowels.

Third exercise:

Imitating the sounds that animals and insects make.

Objectives:

- Discover the different possibilities of using the voice
- Overcome shyness
- Develop their focus and attention

Outcome:

They very much enjoyed these exercises.
Output:

Doing these exercises helped the children to overcome their shyness. As a first approach to drama these exercises are a valuable tool.

**Puppet Show**

**Aims and objectives:**

The objective of organizing puppet shows in this group was to improve the skills of expression. A puppet is something which looks like a person or an animal or a thing that moves and speaks. That is what the children are made to believe. It looks as if the puppet talks to them.

**Activities:**

Children were sitting in front of the show and they were
- conversing with puppets
- singing with puppets
- dancing with puppets
- clapping and acting with puppets

**Outcome:**

It was observed that the children became more concentrated after the show. They were happy to get the experience of a live story.

**Output:**

Children started making their own puppet show using different dolls. They expressed their feelings and ideas better with their friends using puppets.

**FLOATING DINNER EXPERIMENT APRIL 2012**

Floating plate and other utensils underwater
The swimming pool is a place to become comfortable in and with water. Through play we guide the children to swimming exercises which help them to learn to dive and swim.

In the last term a volunteer added to the usual swimming lessons new games and water experiments. What floats? What sinks? How to move in water without ripples? What carries me, what not? What happens to a floating plate when I jump into the pool? Can I dive under a plate without making it sink?

Props like daily kitchen items were very welcome in the pool. Stones turned into potatoes and water in a cup to juice floating along in the plate-boat! Also it demanded teamwork to succeed. Many plates are floating around, so move carefully and swim with open eyes. Some found a spoon- who needs one more spoon for their plate? Does someone have a cup for an empty plate? If diving was too difficult the feet were used. How to lift a spoon or stone up to the surface with your toes? When all items are found, where to place them on a floating plate without making it sink? How much “juice” can be in a cup before it becomes too heavy and makes the plate sink?

The pool was turned into an experimental place where swimming and diving become natural while preparing a floating meal for all of us.

**Slack line**

Last year a volunteer brought us a Slack line which is an elastic ribbon that can be tied between two trees at whatever distance you like up to about 20 meters. The further apart the ends, the more it begins to vibrate in either direction making it more difficult to balance on.

We introduced this activity on a once weekly basis for a couple of months. This last term, since the volunteer returned we were again using this activity.

Balancing on the Slack line has many positive learning factors. It develops general coordination, balance, focus and concentration. Plus social skills such as waiting your turn, not disturbing and not touching the ribbon while waiting. Also it is both a lot of fun and challenging.
NANDANAM KINDERGARTEN

JALAM GROUP (Age: 2+)

Goal/Objective:

The first thing we observed as a team was that the children of this year needed to learn English as for none of them it was their mother tongue, therefore we felt that the main goal. Our first step, as every year, was to make the children feel comfortable with their surrounding as well as their new friends. We focussed on:

- Language Skills
- Physical development
- Social skills

Program and Activities:

Language: Every conceivable opportunity was used to build the children’s vocabulary in English. Objects and actions were named in regular activities like: playing in the sand, playing flash cards and kin-play during circle, in the playground, indoor games & activities even during snack & lunch time. Discussions during circle time, about their daily and/or home activities, such as: “What they had for breakfast? What they did during their weekend or holidays?” In this way it allowed us to see how much their vocabulary had improved or if they needed more help.

Physical development: This year the group consisted mainly of boys and was inclined towards physical activities. Outdoors Activities such as ball games, jumping, climbing, bat game, balancing and other physical games. This made them improve their motor skills and they learnt to play in groups.

Indoors activities such as puzzles, colouring, play dough, collage, building with block, etc. were regularly offered. Initially not many children took interest in it since their need was more related to gross motor skills. Then at one point a few took interest, which provoked the curiosity of other children and gradually all started enjoying activities related to fine motor skills too.

Social skills: At the beginning of the year most of them were playing on their own. Through all our regular activities we helped children develop social skills such as sharing toys/books and playing space so that they may interact with each other in a harmonious way, and learn how to play in groups.

Outcome:

Basic communication with all the children in English was possible at the end of the year. Although their levels varied considerably, each child had a basic range of English vocabulary by the end of the school year. By the middle of the school year children were quite comfortable with each other and would even look forward to each other’s company at start of the day. At the end of the year all children were comfortable with indoor games and activities too, although interest and concentration time varied.

Quantitative: Twelve children took part in the program. Three teachers learned more how to facilitate the development of this age group.
Goal:

- Establish meaningful and deep connections between the children and nature
- Develop ground skills like motor skills, sensory skills, life skills for their independence
- Support the language and intellectual development according to the individual needs of the child
- Develop basic social skills in order to learn how to respect others and how to be respected by others.

Programs/Activity details:

Outdoor activities: Exploring nature - The children were introduced to secure and beautiful outdoor environments. Every week we went out to the Matrimandir and Auroville forests. At least twice a week we had swimming sessions except during rainy season. During the monsoon season we had a lot of fun with rain like running under the rain, sliding in the mud, standing under the water spout and so on. Other activities included playground activities / short walks.

Classroom activities: Circle time - Our day started with a 10 to 15 minutes circle time during which all the children and teachers shared together their daily lives and themes of daily activities, learned songs and listened to stories. In addition we regularly performed group games like counting the numbers of children or passing a burning candle.

Free drawing/painting - Almost every day children were given a free drawing time and twice a week a painting session including Play of Painting.

Story time and sand pit play were provided to children almost every day in order for them to develop their social and language skill through play and story.

Playing with wooden blocks and drama sessions were provided at least once a week in the assigned rooms.
Parents participation: Participation of the parent is an important element in our teaching-learning environment. Therefore, programs were developed where parents could participate and/or provide activities such as storytelling, swimming, gardening, cooking, horse riding and others.

Outcome:

We observed that through our outdoor activities children developed a positive and respectful relationship with their environment. We also observed them to become more sensitive, confident and curious about nature. The provided activities and projects contributed positively to the basic skills of the children including coordinated motor skills but also life skills such as changing clothes, basic hygiene, or cleaning up. Through the parents’ participation, the parents got a deeper understanding about the school and were able to broaden their educational consciousness.

VAYU GROUP (Age group 4+)

Goals and objectives:

We focussed on the overall development of the children. Some of the things we specially focussed on, since those were the requirement of the group, were:

- Language
- Sensory development
- Understanding Nature
- Social skills
- Psychic touch

Program and activity:

Language: This year we had a group of children whose mother tongue was Tamil. They bonded very well together and felt no need to play with other children who did not speak their language. Then there were other children each of whom had a different mother tongue and had difficulty in communicating. So we played circle games related to language, we had discussions in English and sang many songs every day during circle time. We had story sessions daily and we always spoke to them in English, slowly repeating as many times as required and helping them find the right word to express themselves.

Sensory development: As we were working with children we noticed that there were some who really needed to work with the body on the whole. They really needed to go within themselves and be more aware of each part of their body. We began with the tactile because many of the children were very energetic and were always seeking out experiences to satisfy their intense need. They had a hard time being still and focussing their mind on what was happening around them. We played games where their whole body was wrapped inside different kinds of materials or where they touched hot and cold objects. We also played several games where children explored different tastes and smells which led us to have several cooking session.

Understanding Nature: Every week we went for a walk in the farms and the forest area of Auroville, observing, experiencing, questioning and exploring minutely all that came across our way - animals, insects, plants and flowers, stones shells etc.

Social skills: Right in the beginning of the school year we noticed that the children were very independent, creative and could play very well in small groups; but when it came to organized group activities they had difficulties following instructions, taking turns and being aware of what
AUROVILLE SCHOOLS

was happening around them. We had to be very conscious in giving clear instructions, being always consistent in whatever we said repeating with patience and love, whenever required. We really worked on helping them realize why it was important to listen, understand and respect whatever was happening in the class. One of the very touching things was to see how children brought food stuff from home to share with their classmates at circle time regularly. Everybody took a turn in a very spontaneous way, nobody asked them to do that. And whatever was brought, little or much, was shared with a lot of joy and harmony by all.

Psychic touch: As a one big family, together with all the school children as a mixed age group, we celebrated regularly the special festival days in the school. On these occasions we proposed various activities that fostered love and care and developed and developed the sense of beauty and wonder. We cooked together sharing food with one and all, made candles, flower mandalas, danced with lights in hand, we did face painting etc...

Together in a mixed age group again, with all the children of the school we even did a play for the parents... we worked on this project for three months. Children wrote a fairytale, prepared the props created the sound track by lending their voice etc... It really was a magical experience for them where each child chose how he wanted to contribute to the play and learnt to work together with all the children even when they were younger or older than themselves.

Outcome:

By regular discussions and storytelling children improved their English and developed a greater capacity for comprehending different ideas and reflecting on them. They also improved their listening capacity. Through all the sensory games that we played children refined their senses, learnt to take turns, follow instructions and respect each other. They learnt to become more disciplined, and orderly and caring about the material they used. Long walks in nature not only made them become physically strong and sensitive to the beauty of nature but also developed in them a great sense of curiosity and wonder. They questioned everything and looked for answers all around them. Through our collective celebrations and the play, children experienced Nandanam as one big family where everyone was loved and cared for. They also experienced a sense of magic and tremendous joy. Teachers learnt to understand children better and improved their teaching skills

Quantitative: Thirteen children and two teachers took part in the project.

PROJECTS TAKEN UP BY DIFFERENT CLASSES DURING THE SCHOOL YEAR
(In addition to other school activities described above)

Jalam Group (Age group 2+)
We did a project on the body and explored all the five senses but we did not manage to go in depth in the big group since the children were not yet ready to do things together. Each child had in own rhythm and would join an activity only when he was ready for it. So we worked in small groups. Most of the children did learn their body parts through games and songs and grew more aware of their senses.

Prithivi Group (Age Group 3+)
Nature project - The ‘Nature project' was developed over the course of the entire school year. Every week we chose a subject like Trees, Flowers, Birds, Small creatures and we worked on the themes through a story and songs, crafts works, clay works and games.

Special programs such as ‘Animal Totem' (children showed their identities through animals) or body/sensory activities were created for the project.

*Play - School performance ‘Behind the ladder': For nearly two months, three times a week children came together to dance, create a story, perform acrobatics, and make costumes. It was
a very new experience for everyone involved including teachers. The process gave all of us an opportunity to learn from and about each other.

Yayu Group (Age group 4+)
Understanding Nature
As we went for regular outings to the farms and forest areas of Auroville, we observed closely the the world of insects and animals - there habitat, food habits etc... We saw where the spiders lived, how they catch their food, how the white ants make their house, all the different colours and shapes of the caterpillars etc...

Agni Group (Age group 5+)
Project – Life under water and Language
Animals are always a fascinating topic for the children. Thinking of this we chose the topic “Life Under Water” as a means to learn about our environment and to develop the expression skill (language). Throughout this topic we focused mostly on fish.

Goals/ Objectives/Outcome:
- To make them more aware of this part of our environment and become more conscious of our way of interacting with it
- To develop the language skills,
- To work on the mental faculties like observation, thinking and imagination
- To have sensory experiences
- To learn basic science: living and non living things, the fish environment

Program /Activity details:
To begin this project we displayed a board of collage work showing a scene of life in the sea, with the aim of making them curious about this topic. Soon children started asking questions of ‘what and how’ regarding fishes. Then, after we had caught their interest we asked the children what they knew about it and we collected all the information we got. Later seeing the children's interest we also invited one of the parents as a facilitator, who had more knowledge in this area. She helped children to learn more in detail about fishes. Ex: parts of their body, feeding habits, different environment in which they live, all the different types of fishes and their names and lastly their qualities in comparison to other species of animals like crustaceans, mammals etc.. By this the children became clearer about classification of animals.

All these things were understood and experienced by the children through games, stories, discussion, flash cards, art and craft, outings and at the end setting up an aquarium at school.

Outcome:
Children: Studying one theme at a time helped the children to extend their concentration span. Now we see that they are able to hold their attention for a longer time. They also developed a sensitivity and special relation toward this part of the nature. Especially this behaviour we can observe when they stop at our fish tank to observe the fish movements whenever they have free time. If we would give them the choice they could spend hours just standing, watching and talking about it. Seeing the fish growing up, the children related to their own growth.

The children’s fine motor skills became more efficient. They are now able to do basic stitching independently and handle different materials according to its qualities. In addition they learnt to respect their surroundings and give space to others whether it is their friends, animals or any object.
As they learnt the phonetic sound of the letters and connecting three letters together to make a word they became more self-confident in reading, which they are practising more and more. After learning so much about the life in water they were also highly motivated to learn and
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improve their swimming abilities. Now most of them are free with the water element and can swim easily.

Working together on one topic also helped them to develop their social skills like sharing things, expressing and communicating their thoughts to others. Doing team work with a good harmony and coordination. Now they are also able to take some responsibility and lead an activity.

Teachers: We became more innovative in our teaching skills and thereby developed our creativity. Even for us, certain information concerning fish was new, which we learnt with the children. Besides, we got a deeper insight in the child’s psychology and their view of the world.

Community: As these children are directly linked to the community their sensitivity and knowledge will definitively have a positive impact on all.

Quantitative: Sixteen children, two teachers and a volunteer took part in the project and broadened their horizon regarding this topic.

Project - “BEHIND THE LADDER”- A play by all the classes of Nandanam

It started as an unplanned project, encouraging children to use their flight of imagination to create a performance which would sensitize them towards Mother Earth and living in harmony with nature. The idea was to involve all the children of Nandanam in multidisciplinary performance where each child would be free to offer his skills and capacities in enriching the performance.

At the same time to offer a platform where each child could learn and assimilate whatever he needed to, through the experience, as several disciplines were involved, like various elements of acrobatics, several styles of dancing, creating the story, acting, making costumes and backdrops. Each child could contribute according to his interest and capacity in a mixed age group.

Program\ activity:

In order to materialize this dream all the classes took up the same theme for two months and all the teachers coordinated very very closely with each other, so that things could be flexible and open and each child could join into the play exactly in the way he wanted to.

We started with having open discussions with all age groups on themes of nature along with regular sessions of exploring the same themes through dance forms, acrobatics and various other outdoor activities. After observing different groups for a period of time, we decided to give them a first sentence of a story - “on a beautiful sunny day...” From here on children took on the show, bringing forth their ideas and curiosities on table. It was a miracle to see how they had a precise idea of a story. We also realised that they did not wish to write the dialogues, so the team facilitated them by creating the dialogues at their level, following the framework of their story.

Then came the time for choosing the characters. Here the children were quick in picking up their roles. We noticed that while the older children were happy to take up individual role the youngest ones were more comfortable when their whole group was involved. We decided to record the sound track of the play using the spontaneous creative bursts of children rather than stressing them with memorizing and repeating the text over and over. Recording process took place after school hours and was quite an intense experience for them. We did not expect them to feel so anxious and so free in their reactions to the recording.

The idea was to integrate their daily activities in the class rooms with this performance to create a unifying experience for them, stressing on the process more than the outcome. Thus based on the discussion and their ideas about the setting of the play, individual groups with the
guidance of their teachers started creating backdrops in their own groups through painting and art/craft work.

School teachers came forth with their expertise in making costumes after discussion and understanding children’s imagination. Costumes, masks, hats and other accessories were all created by the school teachers and parents contributing their time and skills.

Story Book: On the way the idea of creating a story book on the same theme with illustrations by children came along. Art exploration started with children creating art out of whatever inspired them in the project. It helped them in visualizing the whole performance at a deeper level and also to understand the stage.

Outcome:

Physical development: Through the various disciplines that they were exposed to, children grew stronger, improved their gross motor skills and developed a very good sense of body coordination. While preparing the costumes and backdrops for the play they improved their fine motor skills. Working with different kinds of music and materials they refined their senses.

Emotional discovery: It was a three month process and at times children were getting more curious and impatient to see the final outcome of their efforts. It was a process to keep up their interest levels by holding the space for their constant explorations and discoveries about the project and themselves. Children learnt to deal with their emotions - occasional discouragements and disappointments, shyness, impatience, extreme excitement, nervousness etc.

Mental development: We started having full rehearsals two weeks before the show with sound track and properties. Nearing the performance it not only became a process of creative expression but also taking care of the technicalities involved in presenting a show. Children showed amazing skills at adapting to the artist’s discipline following the cues, remembering their entry, exits and coordinating between themselves for sharing the properties. They improved the concentration, the capacity to follow instructions, memory, imagination etc.

Social skills: While facilitators were present as constant guides, children were encouraged to deal with and resolve for themselves the interpersonal conflicts which arise while working as a team with their immediate groups as well as other groups across Nandanam. It reflected in their increased sensitivities to connect and help each other and being compassionate about needs of others.

Self discovery: The duration of the process, three months proved crucial as it provided an opportunity for children to find out their calling, so they chose to get more involved in certain areas over others thus fully enjoying the process. Introvert children were gently encouraged to explore their interests and express themselves fully in it, over time.

Teachers: It was an opportunity for the whole school to work as one team, which brought out the best of the team dynamics not only in children but teachers and volunteers as well.

The final performance took place in the courtyard of the school which was video recorded and later presented again in Cinema Paradiso. It was encouraging for children to see their own creation in its completion on screen and gave a much deserved boost to their confidence for future.

Quantity:

Fifty five children and fifteen teachers grew together through this learning process.
Transition School Statistics:

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Inspired by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the aim of Transition School is to help our children develop integrally so that each child may develop naturally to his/her full potential, to impart a solid academic grounding, as well as to foster human values so that Auroville children can become responsible individuals, dedicated towards human unity.

Transition School is a school for the children of Aurovilians and Newcomers. Our students, who range in age from 6-15, come from about 24 different countries and many states of India. Many of the students were born in Auroville and have spent their lives in India. The population of Transition School reflects that of Auroville, and provides us with a rich environment for our continuing research in integral education, a holistic approach which perceives each being as unique and aims to guide each individual in the quest for self-knowledge. Sri Aurobindo and Mother are our guides, and the ideals of the Charter of Auroville are foremost in our minds. This is reflected in the methodology and the materials that are used in the classes.

As we aim to offer a holistic and integrated education, class sizes do not exceed 20 students. This creates an environment in which teachers are able to know and follow each child individually. Classes and activities are offered to the children in different ways: project work, outings, cooperative learning groups, individual work, interdisciplinary subjects or single subject classes. Every subject is seen as a tool for self-discovery and an instrument to aid the children to...
learn to express themselves and to gain knowledge. The emphasis on the development of the whole being allows children to learn not only traditional academics, but also to learn to be responsible for their own progress, development and emotions. They also learn to work together, developing team building and conflict resolution skills. We are constantly striving to create an atmosphere and awareness that encourages each individual to strive to reach his/her potential and that promotes human unity.

Transition School has no principal or director; all school decisions are made by the teachers as a team. The teachers have been active as a team in the planning and execution of the buildings, in raising funds, in the development of the curriculum and in the setting of the goals of the school. Each development has been the result of a group decision that is conductive to learning, harmonious with the environment, and fulfilling the needs of Auroville.

The teacher team at Transition is dedicated to the continuing development of integral education in a rapidly growing Auroville.

Highlight: Teachers working together and learning together
Since the beginning, Transition School has been a teacher run school and great effort has been made to discuss issues, solve problems, make decisions, work together and study together. Teachers are learners, and as we are always working to adapt our program to the needs of the children we were happy to be offered a workshop on “Using English in the Auroville Classroom.” Here is a report on that workshop:

Issues In Using And Teaching English In Auroville Classrooms

“A characteristic of young children is their ability to become competent speakers of a new language provided they get enough exposure to it.”

“The mother-tongue is the proper medium of education and therefore the first energies of the child should be directed to thorough mastery of the medium.”

The above quotes were the stimulating and thought-provoking statements presented to the large group of teachers who attended the two half-day workshops given by Gordon Korstange and Heidi Watts on February 4th and 11th, 2012. The workshops were conducted at Transition School and their relevance brought together teachers from several Auroville schools including Aikyam, Udavi, Deepanam, Isaiambalam, and Illaignarkal.

All the participants were engaged in small group discussions of the opening quotations. The sharing that followed found everyone in agreement with the view that neither statement excluded the other, and that both were equally valid. The workshops engaged the teachers in interactive activities in English, which were examples of how the use of English could be encouraged and reinforced especially in situations where English is not the first language of the students.

Issues of language common to all Auroville schools were discussed, and ideas were shared on how to address them. The teachers present had a chance to ask questions, make comments, and get suggestions for incorporating practical exercises in their English curriculum. Everyone was able to get new perspectives for using and teaching English. It was an informative and useful in-service.

We also had the opportunity to have a discussion on Integral Education and Waldorf Education: “What do we have in Common?” with two Waldorf professors from Antioch University, USA. We explored together the ways in that Waldorf and Integral education address all the planes of the being, and particularly the spiritual plane. We also learned about the Waldorf curriculum, and some teaching strategies.

This helped us to further create an atmosphere of engagement and inquiry in the school.
Auroville Schools

Teachers’ professional development has been an important focus of our work at our school and helps us improve and adapt our program and teaching methods so that we are able to meet the needs of the children. The team members also worked this year to improve the mathematics program of the school and also to develop literacy skills.

Highlight: developing literacy skills
The medium of instruction in Transition School is English, but very few of our students come from families in which English is spoken at home; some come to school with little or no understanding of English and outside the school get very little opportunity to practice speaking and reading English. In the beginning of the school year we discussed the need to help the children improve their reading, reading comprehension and spoken English skills. We started with several discussions in which we outlined the goals and offered each other possible strategies. Throughout the year we took the time to share ideas and findings at the teachers’ meetings. Below are reports from some of the teachers.

Dolphins, grade 2: We have focused on reading this school year.

The children had “log sheets” that they had to get their parent’s signature on for reading a minimum of 15 min on working days and 30 min on holidays.

I got footprints photocopied on colored paper (4 to an A4 paper) and for each book that the children read, they fill in a footprint. We have put up the footprints on a wall - one column per child and the footprints are climbing all over the wall now. Some have started doing the upside down thing on the ceiling. The children were very involved in this. Also, some competitive element crept in without anybody saying a word, so children were pushing themselves to read more. Of course the other side existed - At least one very good reader chose to read several small books and have a long line - but overall, I think it worked well.

I brought in a (carefully selected) bunch of books from the library and a bunch of my own. These were small nice books that were at, what I thought was, their level. I was issuing one book per child per day to take home - It was purely voluntary and they could easily choose to not take a book - there was no "consequence" either way. On an average, at least 10 children borrowed books each day.

I have been reading "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" to them and I have all of them drooling in class. Once I finish the book, I think we will have a chocolate-eating-movie-watching session to go with the end-of-term mood! I read out "Giraffe, Pelly and Me" before this and they were so involved - They would all sit there holding their breath and whatever happened in the story, I would hear a collective "Ah!!" and sighs and they would hate it when we stopped at the end of a session.

Thank goodness for Roald Dahl! Towards the end of the term, some of the children came and asked me if the school library would be open during the summer holidays. I must say I was pleasantly surprised. I feel the children have crossed one step - while the actual step is different for each child, there has been some overall movement in the right direction. Now I want to tackle the actual comprehension issue next term.

Grade 3
This year’s grade three class was made up of 17 energetic and enthusiastic children with very diverse needs and abilities. To help promote literacy while addressing the varied needs of the children was challenging. The first step was to get all children interested in reading every day.

In the beginning only a few students were avid readers. The rest seemed to read reluctantly with little interest in selection from library books. They required a lot of help in finding appropriate books at their reading ability that might pique their curiosity. Slowly they learned where to find appropriate books and spent time selecting books which attracted them. Students had quiet time in the class every day to read. We had 2 large trays filled with books at all the different
reading levels for our classroom library. These books were exchanged every three weeks in the school library for new ones. Also, with the support of all parents, students read at home every day.

The level of vocabulary of all students (even the very avid readers) was quite low. To develop their vocabulary, each student was given the challenge of learning three new words a week. They wrote words they came across in their reading, spelling list, etc. on a flash card. On the other side they wrote the definition, a sentence and drew a picture that helped to represent the meaning of the word. This effort gradually helped student's understanding of words. They became very excited when they came across the word again while reading.

In late December, each student was paired with a buddy from the 6th grade. Every Friday they read with their reading buddy for 30 minutes. Their library time was changed to ensure each student had a new book to begin with their buddy. Everyone's fluency and interest in reading continued to improve. They looked forward to the reading time with their buddies. It also gave them a head start into a book that they would continue to read over the weekend.

In the final semester of school, and with the help of 2 other teachers, children were grouped according to their reading abilities. At least 2 hours a week, children read a book together and then answered questions. This ensured that each student was reading a book at their level and being exposed to new vocabulary that he/she was ready to learn. Everyone enjoyed the books chosen for their group and were challenged by the questions.

Most students now enjoy reading and sharing with others the exceptionally good books they have read. As their comprehension improved they were able to actually experience the humour in a story. Hearing their laughter as they read a funny excerpt from a book was delightful.

**Middle School:**

**Buddy reading**

*Description:* Older students listen to younger students reading aloud and assist them with their comprehension skills for half an hour a week.

Once a week the students in 6th grade go to the 2nd and 3rd grades for buddy reading. The students in grade 7 work with the grade 1 children. The younger children benefit greatly from the individual attention they receive.
The older children gain confidence and acquire new skills. Class discussions were held to share ideas about how to assist the younger buddies, exploring successful tactics and approaches. As well as listening to their reading, the older children discuss the story to check their buddies’ comprehension skills. The older children develop the skills they need to help their younger buddies, and they enjoy having the opportunity to play a considerate, caring role with a younger student.

Creative book reports
In 6th grade we explored various creative book reports throughout the year. These ranged from creating crossword puzzles, book jackets and posters to writing letters from a character in the story. The students responded well to these ideas. They were more enthusiastic about writing book reports when there was a creative element than with only summarizing the story. Many of these styles are easy and attractive to display, which makes other students ask questions and want to read those books. When the book reports are displayed in the library or in a hallway frequented by other classes the bright colors and beautiful drawings catch the interest of other students and fosters more interaction between classes on the subject of books and reading.

Literature Circles
In literature circles small groups of students gather together to discuss a piece of literature in depth. It is a wonderful approach to literature in which students are encouraged to discuss—not just answer questions. The discussion is guided by the teachers and the students’ response to what they have read. We made groups of about 8-9 students who met once or twice a week. Literature Circles are very adaptable. Children can all be asked to read the same piece of literature, or groups can choose different pieces of literature. Additionally the stress on what is discussed can change: perhaps one time stressing literary concepts and techniques and another time the theme of the story. Children can work on skills such as summarization, paraphrasing, and many other skills necessary for the development of literacy. The small groups gave space for everyone to participate and to learn from each other. I saw an increase in the level of discussion and a willingness to learn and use new vocabulary. Through these groups we can also accommodate the different individual needs of the students.

In middle school the children are exposed to more complex concepts (science, social sciences...). The difference in how students feel about reading science content versus reading narrative often surfaces in elementary school as a relatively minor problem. By middle school, when reading difficulty and volume have increased, a serious negative impact on science learning can result. A special emphasis was put on this: helping the children take the time to learn the necessary vocabulary and working on reading, questioning and trying to understand the concepts they meet. Using a multisensory approach (using books, computer, diagrams and movies); we aim to help the children comprehend what they are working on and also learn effective ways of learning. There was progress and this needs to be stressed further.

Highlight: Individualized Learning
For the past two years many Transit School teachers have been working on individualized personal learning techniques in the classroom to complement the project and class work.

Each child is unique: has his/her own learning style, strengths and weaknesses, and interests. As a result of our observations and studies, it was decided that teachers would make changes in their classrooms that would include more opportunities for the children to organize their own work and have more choice in the activities. At the same time, it was important that these individuals learn to appreciate each other, to work together, to cooperate and be together as a first step towards a collective that aims for human unity.

This year the school continued to work on personalized learning activities that encourage each child to progress freely, at the same time other group activities will be organized and stressed. Activities such as Music, Awareness through the Body, learning projects and arts, will give the students opportunities to further develop their skills, strengths and interests (as well as try to
overcome any difficulties that they might be facing); this can be done in a collective atmosphere.

Independent learning has been explored in the computer room: Independent learning
Arithmetic/Maths online in the computer lab in Transition School

For the past few months our computer lab has been using the website www.khanacademy.org for a number of students in the field of arithmetic / mathematics. This site has many subjects, but for now we are using only the maths part. Our experience using Khan Academy has been positive: students in the grades 5 and 6 are using it freely and can do it independently. This can be used to remediate difficulties as well as to explore new concepts. We see big level differences between students in the same grades in comprehension and levels. A good thing is that if a student missed one crucial part of maths due to illness or other absence, they can find it now in a matter of seconds.

Report on French second language using computer facilities
This school year, I wanted to use more the computer facilities offered for a foreign language. Through a program of RFI – Radio France International - I found a story for semi-beginners in French.

The story happens in Burkina Faso, Africa. This story revolves around a legend which is very close to the local legend we have in Auroville; that is to have a desert transformed in a lively green place again. Therefore, students were easily connected to the story. We worked on this project from July till completion in December with one computer session per week [for about 30 minutes]. It was regulated in 3 steps mixing individual work and team work.

The listening to the story was very precious, allowing the students to listen to other voices than mine. In this story, one young man who does not know French is in the middle of an adventure where all protagonists speak French and he has to learn and remember words and expressions all along; therefore, some information is also given in English which was, for most of the students, a good reinforcement.

This activity helped some students to become more autonomous looking for information and becoming more attentive.

For the fast students, it was also very handy to provide them more material to watch after their episode work was done; they could explore aspects of African culture [I found mostly material in French] and they all enjoyed it. Along the story, we explored a few aspects of Burkina Faso and the customs/traditions. All the students responded very well to this activity.

This work requires quite some preparation time to build up the questions for each episode [the story used is actually providing some interactive exercises but they were not available when I started the story and afterwards, I found my questions more relevant than those provided, and I provided relevant extra material, but it is definitely worth the time spent. I am already looking for another story for next year!]

Music report on individualized learning
In order for students to be able to express themselves in an art form such as music, it is important that they can identify themselves with the subject as much as possible. It is essential that they have a personal connection to the work, and that they can display their own individual tastes and likes to both teachers and other members of the class.

To facilitate this, yearly we include in the program a project entitled “own choice” Here students are asked to share to the class their own taste in music. They are required to research and present a piece that they enjoy listening to, and to give reasons why they wanted to share it. They are given total freedom in terms of genre and style as long as it is something that they have chosen themselves.
This year we extended this original idea to encourage students thinking of not only why they bring certain music but also how. They were asked to answer questions which lead them to think about where the music they listen to comes from and acquired, and the consequences of their choices. They were asked not only to think as listeners, but in a more global sense to try to understand the process of music making and selling from the side of the musicians and business makers as well.

As well as being a valuable work for the students, for us as teachers this gives us a very personal look at each student. A project such as this allows us to evaluate both research and presentation skills, but more importantly gives us a very personal insight into each student’s choices and tastes in music. This in turn allows us to try and create a program that speaks to everybody, and not only covers the academic needs.

**ATB and individualized learning**

“This is the process of learning to identify with one’s own nature, and not the forms that it takes. It is like identifying the nature of water apart from the waterfall, or the slow-flowing river, or the ocean waves.”

- Daniel Santos

Awareness through the body is individualized learning. In our work we aim to provide a wide variety of situations and activities where each child can explore and discover her/himself. The exercises are proposed to the whole group and every individual is working in the same activity with the same directions, but because the exercises are only tools for self-discovery and self-mastery and not the aim itself, each child will be working in his/her individual unique experience. It is the way the teacher leads the exercises what make ATB activities individualized learning. The teachers focus on empowering the child’s self-sensing faculty; helping the child to acquire confidence and trust on her/his own perceptions, attentively assisting each individual to recognize what the exercise is bringing up for him to work on, and coaching the individual to stay committed to his own process.

Because all our activities are based on focusing attention on physical sensations, over time individuals acquire personal sensory memories – clear physical sensations that one can remember— for the different states of consciousness or awareness, for the perception of the different planes of the being, for the inner movements that take place in each plane and for how a movement in a part of the being ripples onto the whole. As ATB is about personal firsthand experience and not mental concepts, each child follows his own pace into self-discovery and finds his/her own internal tools for a better use/management of her/his being. Our hope is to be able to offer a space where the individual can slowly, as he gains perception and insight, come closer to his inner nature and detach from “the forms it takes in the outer level”—the outer personality.

“I felt quiet and quietness was guiding me”
A 9 year old girl at the end of a landscape exercise done with closed eyes.

“ATB made me realize who I am. It showed that I can do things that I only can do. It explained me that I have potential in everything. Many exercises helped me a lot to see my inner self.”
A 14 year old in his annual assessment form at the end of the school year.

Our role as teachers was to find ways to keep accompanying them into exploring themselves and into finding internal references and ways of adjusting internally. Through the sessions we guided the children, with a soft voice, by giving general hints or directions, and when appropriate by specificity addressing hints or questions to an individual. When a child was able to center and enter the quiet, we would comment on that, helping the child to witness and absorb more the experience. When a child would get tense in his arms, neck or any other part of the body, we were there to help him realize the unneeded tension and learn to use himself in new, softer, more efficient ways. The same would happen when a child would restrict or hold the breath, with our comments we would help the child to realize and overcome this habit of holding the
breathe in the face of a difficulty or when wanting “to be good”. For other children what was happening was more in the emotional or mental levels. We helped children to recognize emotions, moods, or thought, popping up and notice how they would affect their bodies or the plate. They practiced to not get caught by emotions or thoughts, by developing the capacity to stay focused on the sensations of weight, softness and balance.

Not only each child worked on his individual personal characteristics but also each child found its own set of internal references for how it feels holding soft focused attention, endurance, relaxation into doing, calmness, observing inner movements of mind and emotion and its effect in the body, and everybody improve their faculty for self sensing.

“For me balance felt like if nothing in the world matters or if someone makes a noise I could not hear it. It was totally still and really peaceful. I was like in a bubble of gravity where there is no movement in the gravity. No thought could trigger me to drop the plate or de-concentrate me.”

A written feedback from a 14 year old boy at the end of a session with Plates.

**Outputs throughout the school:**

The range of output across the school is wide and varied. It included:

- PowerPoint presentations
- Posters
- Photographs
- Work for the student portfolio
- Essays
- Theatre presentations
- Poetry recitals
- Student written books
- Poetry
- Open House presentations
- Drawings
- Artwork and theatre props
- Reports by teachers and students
- Teachers’ study days

**Outcome:**

All of this is a work in progress; we think that our work and concentration can help all of us (teachers and students) to develop:

- A deeper awareness leading towards self-knowledge
- A sense of wonder
- The chance to recognize and use our knowledge and special talents
- The ability to work
- Cooperative learning and teamwork skills
- Self-esteem and self-discipline
- A sense of independent learning
- Opportunities to work on presentation skills
- A sense of well-being
- Development of discussion groups

**Challenges:**

The development of literacy skills was described as a highlight because we put focus and work...
AUROVILLE SCHOOLS

into this great challenge. This is something that we have been working on and will have to continue to work to develop strategies to try to make sure that all of our children get what they need. The medium of instruction in Transition School is English, but very few of our students come from families in which English is spoken at home; some come to school with little or no understanding of English and outside the school get very little opportunity to practice speaking and reading English.

Another challenge continues to be finding, training and keeping committed teachers who understand the aims of integral education. Transition School has been developing training and mentoring program to help bring people into the school. We have been able to integrate new people into the school, but this is an ongoing effort. We will need to find more teachers in order to keep up with the growth of the population of children in Auroville.

**Long-term Goals:**

1. Further develop and improve the opportunities for all children to build the basic skills necessary for literacy development. While many students come to school with exposure to literacy in their everyday lives, some do not. These students need support so that they will be able to participate and grow to their potential.

2. Further develop and improve the curriculum and educational approaches that promote values and human unity, especially in the areas of science and social studies. We would like to develop an Auroville Studies curriculum.

3. Further develop and research alternative and participatory forms of evaluation that reflect our child-centered, integral program. The portfolio and other forms of assessment are improving.

4. Continue to develop the teacher training program for integral education.

5. Further develop special programs for special needs.
THE LEARNING COMMUNITY

The Learning Community began its third year of operation with 3 new children, making a total of 16. The first week was spent in Fertile in ‘Tamil Week’. The aim was to give time and space for the children to settle down in their new social structure...eating only Tamil food that we cooked ourselves, doing kolams, learning the names of the trees in the forest in Tamil. We set up a shop in which everything was labeled in Tamil and customers had to do their shopping only in Tamil. On the first day we had a Tamil fashion show, which also included all the parents.

The highlight of the week was the Shooting of “Four goats and a Mixie”, a film based on Jaya Lalita’s offer to the Tamil population during the elections. The film was presented at the second Av film festival and was awarded various prizes. The week was a lot of fun and served the purpose more of forming a cohesive group rather than language acquisition.

The Great Story: A thread that is used in project work
The children have continued with the project of The Great Story, focusing on Second and Third Great Lessons - Coming of Life and Coming of Human Beings. The aim is to help address existential questions: Who am I? Where am I? And a sense of ownership and belonging: “This is my story, I am the universe. ”The Great Stories (taken from the ideas of Montessori) are an important and unique part of the TLC curriculum. These stories are bold, exciting, and are designed to awaken a child's imagination and curiosity. The child should be struck with the wonder of creation, thrilled with new ideas, and awed by the inventiveness and innovation that is part of the human spirit.
Traditionally, there are Five Great Lessons that are used to paint a broad picture before moving to more specific study. They consist of:

- First Great Lesson - Coming of the Universe and the Earth
- Second Great Lesson - Coming of Life
- Third Great Lesson - Coming of Human Beings
- Fourth Great Lesson - Communication in Signs
- Fifth Great Lesson - The Story of Numbers

The Second Great Lesson: Coming of Life
The Second Great Lesson involves the coming of life. This lesson revolves around the Timeline of Life, a long chart with pictures and information about microorganisms, plants, and animals that have lived (or now live) on the earth. The great diversity of life is emphasized, and special care is paid to the ‘jobs’ that each living thing does to contribute to life on earth.

This lesson lead to the study of:
- Biology: cells, organized groups, five kingdoms, specimens, observation, use of microscope
- Habitats: location, characteristics, food chains/webs, symbiosis, adaptation, ecosystems, conservation
- Ancient Life: eras of the earth, evolution, extinction, fossil records
- Animals: Evolution with a focus on the most successful animals, the insects.
- Processes that contribute to life: Reproduction, symbiosis, photosynthesis, and respiration.

The Third Great Lesson: Coming of Human Beings
The next Great Lesson is the Coming of Human Beings. This lesson involves a timeline with a tool and a human hand to talk about the three gifts that make humans special: a mind to imagine, a hand to do work, and a heart that can love.

In this lesson we used the “Ascent of Man” by Bronowski as the class reader. The book was translated into a theatrical performance as a medium of assimilation. The following were the topics touched upon.
1. Lower than the Angels — Evolution of man from proto-ape to the modern form 400,000 years ago.
2. The Harvest of the Seasons — Early human migration, agriculture and the first settlements, and war.
4. The Hidden Structure — Fire, metals and alchemy.
5. Music of the Spheres — The language of numbers and mathematics.
6. The Starry Messenger — Galileo’s universe—and the implications of his trial on the shift to “northern” science.
7. The Majestic Clockwork — Explores Newton and Einstein’s laws.
8. The Drive for Power — The Industrial Revolution and the effect on everyday life.
10. World within World — The story of the periodic table—and of the atom.
11. Knowledge or Certainty — Physics and the clash of the pursuit of absolute vs. imperfect knowledge, and the misgivings of the scientists realizing the terrible outcome of the conflict.

Field trips

During the course of the year, the children went on the following field trips:
- Marudamfarm school in Tiruvanamalai - construction of a mud-wood oven with Johnny - 3 days
- Hampi - wilderness experience and historical sites - 10 days
- Chennai - marina beach - nesting olive Ridley turtle expedition - overnight
- Kalapet to Cuddalore by boat
- Tranquebar - 3 days

Field trips and wilderness experiences play an important part of the school’s educational framework. Wilderness experiences embody the values of tenacity, responsibility, judgment, self-discipline, and compassion. These experiences strengthen self-confidence, improve relationships and encourage good judgment, thus building “maturity and character”.

The ability to work as part of a team, to take orders and respond accordingly and to eventually
to lead others, requires among other attributes: good communication and listening skills, effective interpersonal skills, to overcome challenges, and to utilise initiative, drive and motivation not only in themselves but in others. Wilderness experiences can be an effective way of developing these qualities within individuals.

These excursions are an opportunity for self-learning, introducing children to a place where external distractions such as noise, pollution, peer pressure, family conflict, inter-personal relationship issues etc seem to pale into insignificance when confronted with the wonders of tranquility, raw and uncontaminated nature along with an opportunity to experience internal and external ‘space’ within which to make a connection to their inner self. Children are given the opportunity to explore what is really meant by self-fulfilment and self-actualization, it is in essence the centre of our own ‘spiritual’ being, the one place where we once existed without life’s ‘baggage’ and contamination.

Within such environments, individuals can learn to appreciate nature and its resources, understand the importance of conservation and sustainability, and to be aware of the finely balanced relationship between humanity and the sensitive eco-system that exists on our planet.

Wilderness environments allow young people unique opportunities to operate, test out, discover and take on board elements that they feel they need in order to view themselves as a unique human being who whilst may be a small cog in a large wheel, they are nonetheless essential and an important component part if that wheel is to continue to rotate.

Service Week

In additional to the regular schedules, we have undertaken a week of ‘service learning’ three times in the year, where each child has chosen a unit in the larger community of Auroville and has worked for a week in this unit.

“Community” has two connotations. One is what the learners get from the community. The other is what the learners give to the community. Every aspect of the community is an integral part of the learning program. Farms, forests, parks, shops, services, units, the streets and the environment provide learning opportunities, facilities and services for self-learners. At the same time, learning becomes a service to the community as future citizens become involved in the local community taking part in any or all community activities.

The community provides a context for this learning, and community members serve as resources and partners in teaching. Helping in the community is seen as people-to-people shared learning. The “teachers” are community members of all ages. The teachers are not necessarily schoolteachers. They are motivated people who have acquired knowledge and skills and are willing to share these with children. It also fosters professional mentorship by making contact with working professionals in the community. These interactions also build life changing experiences and relationships.

A component of a learning programme that focuses on the application of theory is an authentic, work-based context. It offers a way to extend children’s attention beyond the classroom to the world as it actually is, and to engage them in the process of devising solutions to the social and environmental problems they will confront as adults. This approach engages children academically by combining real world experience with classroom learning. It promotes citizenship and prepares children to understand and respect their community.

There is an added facet in reclaiming a sense of authentic personhood from the roles we play in society--roles such as expert, teacher, student, consumer, and employee. Each individual possesses (or simply is) a complex personality containing many dimensions of experience, knowledge, feeling, and purpose. Children are given an opportunity to experience their own multifaceted dynamic nature in more real and less contrived environments.

Following is a list of units in which the children were placed:
In the last two terms 6 children from the middle and older groups participated in a pilot programme called ‘Baking English’. The programme uses baking as a medium for developing skills related to English language development. In addition, many other learning opportunities arose throughout the course of the sessions. The sessions allowed for writing and spelling development through dictations of the recipes to be explored. Hands on baking sessions allowed the children to practice following written instructions, working with a partner (task delegation, sharing responsibilities) and creative writing emerged from inspiration drawn out of the sessions (for example, writing a conversation between butter and sugar). In addition, various topics in grammar were addressed, which too emerged from the creative writing exercises, such as an exploration into the rules of direct and indirect speech. At the end of the year, the students compiled a baking book, which included all of the recipes attempted during the sessions (with formatting, pictures, and typing done entirely by the students) as well as a historical look at the origins of the various delicacies, which was documented and included in the book. This programme offered the students a chance to explore many aspects of their language development though a living and hands-on context. Learning was alive, spontaneous and relevant to what they were directly experiencing. The concept is very much in keeping with how TLC sees the learning process– as a life experience, which encompasses many facets, and has a holistic trend, rather than as a compartmentalized subject. In fact, Baking English also lead the students to explore the mathematical concepts of fractions, weight and volume not to mention experiencing first hand how different subtle energies in ones being can influence the physical phenomenon of how the cake turns out!

Parent Teacher Interactions

The communication between parents and children is critical to the process of education. In the year 2011 - 2012 concerted steps were made in this direction. In addition to the one-on-one parent teacher meetings, the adults in TLC needed a tool for collective communication; a tool that allowed for the attitude of a learner. To enable us to listen deeply and open to the worlds of others, making possible bridges of understanding. As we learn to suspend our certainty and still speak from our hearts, connection and collaboration become more possible. We chose the dialogue process, introduced and facilitated by Audrey.

In addition to meeting once a month in dialogue we met once a term for a planning session, one was facilitated by Amir using ATB as a tool and the other by Hans Peter using participatory tools for planning. In the last term we came together for a sharing and farewell circle for the older children that were leaving TLC.

BE TRUE - NOT VIOLENT

Be true not violent is a peace manual. It was written to teach children, youth and adults around
the world how to solve their conflicts peacefully. Every lesson begins with a game to bring the group together and get playfully into the session. There are a large variety of games like movement games, trust games, role-play and theatre, as well as games for the senses. The topic of each lesson is introduced with a story and then there is activity or role-play in groups, reflecting actively on the story. Every session concludes with breathing exercises and relaxation to slow things down and bring the children back into the present. The book is a beautifully illustrated comic-style book by Auroville’s Emanuele that takes the child through “The Adventures of Papui, Draggy and Something Else.” Through numerous colorful illustrations, the three friends fly around the world and contribute to peace on earth.

The Forest of Forgotten Dreams

Every Wednesday in the middle of the week all of us at TLC big and small spent the day with Johnny in Fertile forest. With no lesson planned and no prior preparation, each Wednesday had something new in store of all of us. One overall idea that came up earlier in the year provided a loose structure until the end of the year. We decided to develop a forest trail that had a story to tell. It began at Cassius rest, and it was this brave warrior’s soul that would take you through the forest of forgotten dreams.

While children might spend time on a playground in an unstructured setting, the forest offered a different set of benefits which goes without saying, the variety provided by the forest stimulated and developed the child’s body, it offers an added boost to the development of the mind. When engaged in dynamic and varied outdoor play, a child encounters opportunities for decision making that stimulate problem solving and creative thinking. Time in the forest also strengthened social bonds between children. The unstructured time inherent in play allowed for the social interactions that are important building blocks of emotional intelligence. Children had increased opportunities for negotiating, sharing, problem solving, and working together. The forest worked as a facilitator for important childhood social interactions. Not only should we value that kind of space for our children as learners but for ourselves as adults learning. It is in these unstructured and supportive spaces that ideas and curriculum emerge for all.

Our spaces and the group

This year we have made use of the new last School building which has been completed in its first phase of construction. In addition, we have continued to benefit from Johnny’s invaluable input in Fertile, and many of the kids continue spending time there on Sundays, early morning cow milking, night walks in the forest, sleepovers etc. Following Cyclone Thane we spent a week in Fertile helping to clean and clear the debris and damage caused to the community and the forest.

Our older group began a trial period at Last School, which was very successful for both children and the Last School team. As a result, these 8 children will be graduating from TLC and joining the Last School programme full time next year. In addition, there will continue to be overlaps with TLC through outings, sports, Fertile etc.
Our Background

Deepanam School started in 2006 based on the lines of the Free Progress system developed by Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. The whole emphasis is on free growth and natural development of the child. Our research is to see that by providing children creative activities for the joy of learning in a free choice environment we could help them discover within themselves greater horizons of knowledge.

But, freedom sans discipline is a license given to the lower rajasic and tamasic tendencies; it can only impede the progress of our children. In fact, DISCIPLINE and FREEDOM are complementary and not contradictory truths or realities. They have been amply dealt with by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother both for the children and adults of Auroville and we need to turn to that (i.e., what they have said about discipline and freedom) in all humility and sincerity.

We aspire to achieve the following ideals the Mother has explained about the educational activities in Auroville.

- "In this place, children would be able to grow and develop integrally without losing contact with their soul. Education would be given, not with a view to passing examinations and getting certificates and posts, but for enriching the existing faculties and bringing forth new ones.

- In this place titles and positions would be supplanted by opportunities to serve and organize.

- The needs of the body will be provided for equally in the case of each and everyone. In the general organization intellectual, moral and spiritual superiority will find expression not in the enhancement of the pleasures and powers of life but in the increase of duties and responsibilities."

To achieve the above ideals it demands a much wider scope of teaching content. That is where the three principles of education preside over all true learning:

1. Nothing can be taught;
2. The mind has to be consulted in its own growth;
3. To grow from - near to far.

Assisting us in this process are the two gifts of Nature: a) an insatiable curiosity, and b) spontaneous imitation and hero worship.

Armed with these three principles and two gifts we can easily take up the challenge of awakening knowledge in the mind, heart and body of the child as an obvious organic experience.

"To love to learn is the most precious gift that one can make to a child, to learn always and everywhere." - The Mother

We are very much inspired and helped by the Sri Aurobindo International Centre of Education (SAICE) at Pondicherry.
Deepanam School Statistics

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Our programme

We are organizing a program for students from the age of seven to fourteen years in which they learn, in progressive stages, to realize and value the full use of the Free Progress Education. We prefer to keep the children in small groups or batches of about 10 - 12, for greater intensity.

Each class teacher is free to work in the way that will best help the children to progress. What is important is that the teachers emphasize on the learning and not on the books selected or completed, therefore, it is a process of living and not a preparation for future living.

Keeping in mind that method is never so well applied as when one has discovered it oneself, and that the interest of the students is proportionate to the true capacity of the teacher we work with children through flexible projects, rather than stick to rigid textbooks in fixed classes, and strive to make the process of learning appealing and interesting to them.

Our team is greatly inspired by the richness and diversity of Auroville and we do try to integrate the various aspects of the community in our programme.

In a project-based learning, it is not necessary that everyone belonging to a group does the same thing, but they do work towards the same goal or task. No stress or obligation is imposed thus making the pace of study more creative and flexible. No rivalry or competition is encouraged as neither marks nor grading is awarded to students.

The values of cooperation and coordination are automatically learned resulting in a better organization and progress. At the same time there is perception and acceptance of the differences in the learning styles, interests and talents of the project members.
Some highlights of the year 2011 - 12

1st and 2nd grade classes called Rabbits Beauty: (7-8 years old)

In the last 5 months we combined the 1st and 2nd grades together 3 days in a week to carry out a project on the 'Rivers of India' keeping the third principle of education in mind: to grow from the near to the far. We started with mythological stories of some of the main rivers and after getting the students’ full interest and concentration we opened new windows of history and geography through this one project.

Resources:

- stories
- songs
- books
- images from Internet

Activities

- Reading
- Writings
- drawings
- paintings

Evaluating measures:

- Making charts for each river.
- A drama for the annual school programme.
- Printing a book of the whole project for them and by them as documentation.

4th grade class called Rainbow horses: (10-11 years old)

Keeping the first principle of education in mind: nothing can be taught, the teachers encouraged students to create their own projects for languages- English & French & Tamil. It was a student empowered programme and each took part by challenging themselves.

These young adults throughout the year with their growing love for these languages created very good examples for the others by presenting a few items for the annual school programme like:

- A play in French and Tamil
- A booklet of short stories written by them in English
- And a musical evening with songs in different languages

6th Grade - The Giraffes & their BAMBOO - CRAFT - PROJECT

One week before the Christmas holidays, the giraffes class went to the Bamboo Research Centre in Auroville. At the Bamboo Centre there is a small shop where they sell all things made out of bamboo: necklaces, bracelets, chairs, toys. First the children were given an introduction regarding qualities of bamboo and different species of bamboo. Then they were given the choice of taking up small projects as per their own choices - all the students in this class were keen to do something. It was a free choice programme and yet they all chose to participate without hesitation. And the result of this workshop was a real surprise for the teachers to see the students totally focussed and self-motivated.

1. Arnav, Abhinash, Tigris (furniture)
2. Eurydice, Mingee, Lilou (Giraffe-model)
3. Aatman, Nitzan, Meera, Datchaini, Anton (jewellery)

This was an example of: The mind has to be consulted in its own growth!

7th grade class called Unicorns: (12 to 13 years old)

As this is our oldest class which has undergone the training of the integral education and the process of free progress system, they have come out very mature, responsible and concentrated
individuals. So this year they have been allowed to choose their schedule for the last term with the objective to offer more flexibility in their learning process, to help them to discover themselves. All of them were encouraged to become teachers and give lessons to either the younger children or to their own classmates, depending on the subject they were confident with. This training had a deep impact on their personality and self-confidence, which was positive.

During this time, the teachers took the opportunity to help the children discover their personal weaknesses and to work upon them. This was partially accomplished through discussions with the class teacher (which happened at least in two sessions every week) but also by talking/discussing with them during the regular classes and making them observe themselves.

Another challenge was also to make them work together as a group of young teenagers coming from different backgrounds and totally different interests. This was achieved again by talking to them and explaining them the importance of team-spirit and cooperation. At the end, even if the members of the class didn't create close relationship they have learned to tolerate, understand one another and to have fun with each other during school time.

Here was another opportunity to achieve the principle that: “the mind has to be consulted in its own growth!”

**Other aspects of integral education at Deepanam:**
- Some new and continuing classes like Archaeology, arts and painting.
- Sanskrit through chanting and singing.
- Music, Cooking, Clay, Gardening and Computer programming.
- Life Science and study of Common Birds of Auroville.
- Other activities include field trips to Auroville forests and nature sanctuaries, farms, Centre for Scientific Research, and art and craft exhibitions held in the Pondicherry Ashram School & Ashram Exhibition Hall.

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**Physical Education**

...Our base is our physical being, our body. Therefore we have to build up a body solid, healthy, enduring, skilful, agile and strong, ready for everything. There is no better way to prepare the body than physical exercise. Sports, athletics, gymnastics and all games are the best means to develop and strengthen the body.”

*The Mother*
AUROVILLE SCHOOLS

As part of our programme we support and encourage the Physical Education Programme at Dehashakti Sports Complex situated in the cultural zone. Dehashakti offers the children a place to play, learn and grow in an environment designed for an Integral physical development. It draws its living inspiration from the ideals set before us by The Mother on Physical Education.

- They come across their mental, vital and physical strengths and weaknesses.
- It helps them to set a target to challenge their own score.
- Builds up the team spirit and sense of responsibilities.
- They learn to control their emotions whether they win or lose.
- They build up positive approaches to life in difficult circumstances.

Thus physical education plays very important part in our education here at Deepanam. We envision Deepanam as an experimental school in an environment, which gives the possibility to the children to develop the necessary qualities for the free progress education and the joy of learning for its own sake.

![Image of a child playing outdoors]

We wish to equip ourselves to serve the needs of **200 students from the age of 7 years to 14 years old in the coming five years**, who would be participating in a Free Progress Education & Self-motivated-learning on the lines as explained very distinctly by Sri Aurobindo:

> “Each human being is a self-developing soul and the business of both parents and teacher is to enable and to help the child to educate himself, to develop his own intellectual, moral, aesthetic and practical capacities and to grow freely as an organic being. Not to be kneaded and pressured into form like an inert plastic material. If we give the deeper self, the real psychic entity within a chance to come forward, it will itself take up most of the business of education out of our hands and develop the capacity of the being towards a realization of its potentialities.”

Deepanam is thus a fast-growing school aspiring to provide the community at large with an education facility for the children of Aurovilians, Newcomers, Guests, and Friends of Auroville.

As the Mother has said,

> “Auroville wants to be a universal town where men and women of all countries are able to live in peace and progressive harmony above all creeds, all politics and all nationalities. The purpose of Auroville is to realise human unity.”
FUTURE SCHOOL

Mission:

Inspired by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, the vision of Future School is to develop an educational environment in which Auroville adolescents and all those dedicated to their education may reach their own unique potential through a balanced development of body, mind, emotion and spirit. Underlying this integral approach is the development of faculties that will allow us to pursue the unfolding of our inner truth in harmony with the material world.

Interwoven with this endeavor toward individual development is a collective aspiration toward a manifestation of the ideals of Auroville as expressed in its Charter. Toward this, we aim to discover the essence behind our diverse cultural, ethnic, and individual heritages while reflecting the international character of Auroville.

Our deepest aspiration is to progressively develop our consciousness to prepare the youth and ourselves to manifest a truer, higher and more joyful life on earth.

Research Objectives

- Provide a student-centered, integral education for Auroville youth between the ages of 14-20.
- Develop and offer programs which foster awareness and growth of the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects of the being.
- Encourage students to follow a value-oriented approach to life in which they have a deeper understanding of personal, community and global responsibility.
- Enable students to become self-aware, self-motivated, and self-controlled.
- Help students to explore ways to set and reach challenging goals.
- Expose students and ourselves to new experiences and approaches to learning and understanding.
- Provide educational programs and activities that open a wide range of possibilities for students upon ‘graduation’ from the school.
- Establish an interactive environment of beauty and light which inspires progress and creates a variety of opportunities for growth.

Program details:

Learning Environment

As Auroville is an international community the school maintains an international character by bringing together students from many different nationalities, with their varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds, in an atmosphere of protected freedom and harmony. This is a basic step in the promotion of international understanding, peace and human unity. In addition to this, as most of the teachers are Aurovilians, they are truly dedicated to the ideals and Charter of Auroville and so can encourage, support and guide the mostly Aurovilian student body in their own explorations of their role in and relationship to Auroville. This influences the way they approach their work and sets the framework for the relationships amongst the students and the teachers. We hope that this environment, and the educational program itself, will help the students further understand themselves and their “raison d’etre”.

Program

Future School is currently offering a high school equivalent education to primarily Aurovillian students. This past year there were 63 adolescents/young adults representing 15 nationalities enrolled in the school. Each student has an individualized program which is created according to
AUROVILLE SCHOOLS

their choices: around core subject areas they choose elective subjects as well as physical and creative arts activities. As most of these latter activities take place outside of the school campus, making use of the many diverse possibilities in Auroville at large, we actively assist them, usually through our mentoring program, in finding teachers/coaches/guides who can help their talents and interests in these areas to progress and grow. Students are generally expected to stay in the school for 4-5 years, which allows ample time each year for students to complete their core courses and explore and develop other areas of interest.

We consider Auroville itself to be a very rich educational resource for our youth so we regularly approach various individuals in order to organize other activities that are requested by students but have not yet been offered. In this way, there is more interaction between the community and its youth, and therefore more involvement and understanding on many levels.

The school incorporates many different teaching/learning methods and environments: projects, tutorials, independent research, traditional lectures; small groups, large groups, one-on-one approach, peer teaching, work experience and self-study. In this way we hope to meet the needs of each individual, and we feel that the combination of required areas of study with choice of particular subjects gives the students the chance to get in touch with new areas of knowledge and at the same time to explore their own interests and needs.

**Evaluation**
The students are actively involved in assessment and evaluation, of both their own progress and the effectiveness of the teachers and the school as a whole. As the Auroville schools do not give conventional grades or report cards, methods used for evaluation at Future School include:

**Reflective assessments**
- Teacher and class evaluation by students
- Student self-evaluation
- School self-assessment by staff
- School assessment by students
- Observation
- Mentor meetings and other conferences

**Skill-based assessments**
- Internal tests, assignments and portfolios
- Project work with presentations, internal and/or public
- Written progress reports

**Activities**

**Field Trip**
- **Tranquebar:** In early December, 2011, the school proposed a field trip to an old Danish fort that was in the process of being renovated in the coastal town of Tranquebar. After a 3 hour bus ride during which we saw a great variety of scenery we got to the village of Tharangambadi (Tranquebar).

The bus squeezed through a beautiful gateway which, judging by the huge wooden gates and the unique style of the arch, seemed to have been made in the time when the Danes inhabited Tranquebar. As we got deeper and deeper into the old village and closer and closer to the ocean we began to see more and more of the Danish influence on the architecture of the buildings. Finally the bus stopped and we happily started exploring.

Most of us went towards the ocean where a rock wall had been made to protect the village from erosion. One could see on either side of us the remains of an old wall completely made out of small bricks, one could not determine the height but it must have been at least 2 meters thick. One could also see the surf breaking out at sea, showing how the wall had continued out for about fifty meters before curving around the
village.

We were then called into one of the buildings which was currently being used by Upasana, a unit of Auroville that has been very involved in the renovation of the town and providing livelihood for its inhabitants, particularly the women. We were offered a great lunch before continuing on to the actual fort.

It had a huge wall encircling it and inside there was a big courtyard with a well in the middle and a huge flag post beside it. There were also dungeons with fat grills and old rusted manacles attached to the walls. We went up some stairs to the main part of the fort which had cannons at 3 meter intervals and two glass-paned doors. When we went inside the doors we found ourselves in a museum containing many old artefacts such as guns, swords, cutlery, vases etc. After going through the museum we went back outside and started to head in the direction of the bus. We then began the 3 hour ride home.

Personally I am really glad I decided to come on the trip. I enjoyed seeing what is being done there, and to know that Auroville is a part of this meaningful project to renovate a piece of Indian history. *(By Dylan Imhoff, student of Future School)*

**All-School Activities**

Beautification and improvement activities in which students and teachers/staff participate on campus are very important to the feeling of togetherness in Future School. Two such examples are:

1. **Post Cyclone Thane clean-up** - Once the roads and access points of the school had been reopened by Auroville clearing teams, school started after a week’s delay. Although a great amount of work had been done in the area, the campus still had many fallen trees, including a large one in the central courtyard, and debris to clean up. Several of our teachers played an active part in cutting the fallen trees, and subsequently an all-school clean-up day was organized. The many hands that came with good energy and a positive spirit helped to make this cumbersome task pass in a fun and productive way.

2. **Moving to new Study Lab/Library** - Classes were canceled for two days in order to encourage and allow maximum participation in the physical movement of the books, shelves and other materials from the old space into the new, by teachers/staff and students.

3. **Weekly Seminars** - These have been an ongoing feature of our school for many years. However, now that we have a substantial number of alumni from our school with a wide variety of experiences, they have become one of the most popular types of speakers. This past year we had 8 alumni come and speak to our current students, sharing their experiences and offering advice.

**Interdisciplinary Learning Programs**

1. **Introduction to Agriculture** was offered as an elective course with one double period (an hour and 45 minutes) once a week. Three students of Future School, three to four long-term student volunteers from abroad, and one or two adult Aurovilians working in Auroville farms and gardens joined the course sessions. In total ten resource persons from various activity fields in Auroville were asked to deliver demonstrations and lectures. Out of 31 class sessions, nine were organized as visits to farms (and one village). The program should be seen as a test run so as to design an appropriate curriculum that would raise interest in ecological agriculture amongst Auroville youth.

*Feedback from 2 students of the course:* “The Agriculture Course has been a great learning experience. We covered topics related to organic sustainable farming, EM technology, genetically modified crops, the history of agriculture, and the different methods used by farmers to grow their crops. Physical farm work was also included plus a field trip to Bangalore to visit the Bio Fach Agriculture Exhibition in September 2011. There were lots of farmers displaying their products, and it was amazing being around the markets and seeing all the new
products. For those interested in farming and agricultural based work, it is a good course to pursue. (By Dingbawi, student of Future School, and Erin, teacher of Future School)

- **Integral Performing Arts Program:** From January 2012 we offered Future School students an introduction to performing arts 2 hours per week. There were 7 students enrolled in the first trial. This course laid the base for living arts. Performing arts means everything that is related to being on stage but also being backstage:

  Three main fields of study and work are:
  - Administrative: organisation, communication, budget, fund-raising, project management
  - Technical: sound/light, multimedia, maintenance, repairs
  - Creative: music, theater, dance, script and song writing, radio, filming/editing, graphics, decor/scenery, photography

**Course spotlights**

- **Art**
  - **Digital Storytelling:** Karen Johansson, an education student from Sweden, was here in Auroville to do research in Integral Education as part of her course. She worked with Future School Art students in the medium of Digital Storytelling, whereby the students were asked a question to which they had to come up with highly personal answers. They then had to interpret their answers and express the interpretation as an image. This was then executed on a long sheet of paper, which was subsequently videoed as it was moved in one direction. While they are doing this, the student narrates his/her answer. This whole video with image and voice over narration, when played back, tells the story of the particular student. The question the students were asked was, “Why do you go to school?” The students had varying and interesting stories, from the seeking of knowledge and truth to safeguarding their futures. In art, this acts as yet another form of expression aided by today’s technology. (By Sasi Somu)

- **Photography classes:** Due to an overwhelming demand from students, photography was introduced as a subject in Future School last year, and was continued with some new and some experienced students this year. In this regard and as a next step, the teacher and students were able to set up a dark room and have been producing traditional black and white images. (By Sasi Somu)

- **Camera Obscura Workshop:** Goetz Rogge, a German photographer, was here in Auroville during Dec 11 to April 12. He works with a Camera Obscura, which essentially is a dark chamber with a pin hole through which the inverted image is projected on the opposite wall. Goetz then pins up large sheets of colour photographic paper which captures the image. Goetz gave a presentation to the school about this technique and also did a workshop with the photography students. He also generously financed the making of two 80 X 80 cms Camera Obscura boxes which the students used to produce their images. These images along with the works produced by Goetz were exhibited in Savitri Bhavan from 27th March to 3rd April 2012. This exercise was of great benefit to the students. It allowed them to experience photography in its most basic form where time and light are the most important ingredients. In using a Camera Obscura they get to handle the camera in its most primitive form as compared to the digital cameras of today and this gave them a solid understanding and grounding in Photography. The two boxes have been retained by Future School for future classes in the use of the Camera Obscura.

- The **fashion design** course was followed this year by just one student, but a very motivated and interested one; we created 2 collections.
For the first one I asked the student to choose a sport and to do Internet research to get some photos (at least 5/6) that would be the inspiration point for the entire collection. She was then asked to draw a collection that included a suit, pants, shirt, cocktail dress and evening dress.

The second one was inspired by the fashion of the 1960’s. She had to do the same research that she did for the first one but this time she was free to choose which item to draw.

For each collection she needed to come up with 20 designs.

It has been very interesting because this student had never studied fashion design and I could really see the growth of her capacity and imagination. (By Alice Poli)

Follow-up on previous goals (for 2011 - 2012)

- Develop further and offer additional inter-disciplinary courses - See Activities, Inter-disciplinary Learning Programs

- Explore and integrate additional possibilities for work/study programs (for non-academic students who may prefer to have an educational program that includes some basic academic courses in school along with an apprenticeship) - The school assisted a greater number of students (6) to create work and study programs, focusing on skill-building, according to interests expressed by each student.

- Create more thorough documentation of our ex-students: where they are, what they are doing, what are their plans for the future (short and long term), etc. - Information in this regard was collected and tabulated in our database. In doing this research we found that approximately 50% of our alumni have chosen to go to universities in India and abroad; 20% have chosen to enroll in apprenticeship programs (mainly in France and Germany); and 30% have chosen to stay in Auroville and get involved in various projects and fields of work, including tutoring and teaching classes in Future School. The number of alumni of our school will soon reach one hundred!

- Begin to document the methodology and ‘syllabus’ for at least one study area/course, which will be Biology with an integral approach - Due to family problems, the teacher who had proposed this goal was unable to return to the school.

Goals for 2012-2013

We will work towards the following goals during the coming school year:

- Expand and strengthen existing inter-disciplinary courses, and offer new ones - A much-changed version of the Agriculture Course will be offered in the subsequent school year (2012-2013). We will also offer a new advanced course in performing arts called Integral Performing Arts School. This course will be a complete program of 30 hours per week. 12 students will join the introductory course for the first semester and 6 students are enrolled in the Advanced Course.

- Expand and strengthen the existing work/study programs (for non-academic students who may prefer to have an educational program that includes some basic academic courses in school along with an apprenticeship) - This will take forms such as adding material to our library/study lab, creating feedback mechanisms from the work places, and identifying a greater number of work environments in which to place our students.

- Refine documentation of our ex-students: where they are, what they are doing, what are their plans for the future (short and long term), etc.

- Complete the raw structure of upcoming Multi-Purpose Space and Classrooms (Ground + one) as part of a two-year construction project generously funded by the Government of India.

Conclusion:

Within Auroville’s endeavor towards unending education and human unity, the development of
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an educational system that equally benefits teachers and students is a necessary step in helping us reach our fuller potential as conscious, discerning individuals who are open to different ways of thinking about and responding to the world around us. Our primary goal continues to be the development and implementation of an integral education that is deeply rooted in the ideals of Auroville.

FUTURE SCHOOL STATISTICS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statistic</th>
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<tr>
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<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number which left for other reasons</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>Number of full-time staff</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of part-time staff</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Multipurpose Space and classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings or other new construction completed</td>
<td>Study Lab/Library</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Goal/Objective/Outcome:

Our aim is to assist the students in finding what they truly are and want to become, and to build in themselves a rich multifaceted personality, through a great variety of learning activities.

Program/Activity details:

The program of studies is defined by the students themselves. It includes literature, art, social sciences, natural sciences, philosophy, mathematics, languages (including Tamil and Sanskrit) and sport, but also extra-curricular activities like dance, theater, cycling and trekking, so that all the parts of the being are awakened and developed.

Our school is going to be relocated in the Cultural Area, closer to the other schools of Auroville.

A first phase has been completed for a budget of 45 lakhs. The second phase started in February 2012.

Outputs:

We had an average of 12 full-time students during the year. In addition, courses have been offered to young Aurovilians and adults on Indian culture, Sri Aurobindo’s philosophy and Tamil. Our Art Center is being used by 70 students who are part of other Auroville schools’ programs as well as by adults. We have 11 teachers on maintenance, 4 full-time, 6 part-time, and 1 apprentice.

Outcome:

*Personality development*

Inviting the student to define their own program of development, within the ‘Free Progress’ approach, has a demonstrable structuring effect on their personality and increases their autonomy, self-confidence and motivation. The fact that the spirit of Auroville’s ideals is very much present in the school, creates a process of personal and genuine assimilation of these idea-forces, not only for their own sake but also in relation to the issues of the contemporary
world. These two elements are the frame within which the students define their position and project for the future.

**Mental development**
The main domains covered have been stress on literature, whether English, Indian or French, for the development of complexity into the cognitive capacities. The faculties of understanding and of speech have been combined in a special training of the capacity to analyse and summarize long articles followed by oral presentations on contemporaneous issues. Sri Aurobindo is being studied not as a normative knowledge, but as a means to open new doors of comprehension, to deepen and widen the mental faculty of synthetic understanding.

**Development of the Vital Being**
We keep observing how much the tapasya of art can carry ethical as well as aesthetical values: the search for harmony and perfection, the discipline involved and the need to go through all the phases of expression, from the original concept to material realisation, is a powerful means of self-education and a simulation of life situations they will meet in the future. Through harmony and beauty, Art offers also one of the best means to bring the life force under the control of the more conscious parts of each one’s being.

**Development of the Physical Being**
The students have been following several types of physical activities: Dehashakti’s sports program and dance. In addition to physical health and balance, there are many psychological qualities involved in physical activities, which are being established in the physical consciousness with a stability that the mental and vital beings cannot offer.

**Psychic and Spiritual Development**
Although this part is not an object of teaching, it underlies all our activities as the background that supports and gives sense to the rest. The awakening to the psychic element in human beings is the real aim of our education, the school activities offering the occasion and materials for it. It is basically founded on the psychological fact that one grows by what one gives and consciously offers, as a path of self-becoming and self-perfecting. Once this aim has become conscious in them, a lot of the educational effort is taken up by the students themselves. Its natural outputs are a growing capacity to self-determination, an aspiration to grow and to progress, a happy learning and a sense of togetherness.

**Last School Statistics:**

| **Number of full time students enrolled** | 12 |
| **Part-time students from 4 other schools** | 70 |
| **Young adults and adults part time** | 18 |
| **Number of new full-time students enrolled** | 2 |
| **Nationalities represented** | 7 |
| **Number of full-time students graduated** | 3 |
| **Number which left for other reasons** | 1 |
| **Number of full-time staff** | 4 |
| **Number of part-time staff** | 7 |
| **Aurovilians on maintenance** | 11 |
| **Buildings or other construction work begun** | 2nd phase new location |
| **Buildings or other new construction completed** | 1st phase new location |
| **Type of classes** | Free Progress |
**LILALOKA**

**Mission:**

Lilaloka, the universe of Play (in Sanskrit), offers a new educational approach centred on Joy, in order to become our own life's creator.

Lilaloka offers various activities, based on self-discovery and spontaneous self-learning through Play, which allow the child to reveal himself/herself as an individual and amongst others, without competition or judgement.

This place is opened to all children, schooled or not, having difficulties or not, beyond all categorizations and allowing a mix of ages. The team of Lilaloka wants to work in collaboration with schools and parents, considering each child as an evolving being.

**Objectives:**

- To create a space dedicated to the child, parallel to the schools, open to all ages and types of children, schooled or not, with or without specific needs, beyond all categories
- To create, within this space, a light-hearted atmosphere of beauty and harmony, based on respect and non-judgment.
- To bring together and offer individual and collective (but not competitive) activities for children, based on self-discovery and spontaneous self-learning through Play
- To offer a support for special needs or handicapped children
- To share knowledge, offer training and demonstrate new visions and educational tools, treating the child as a soul in evolution.
- To laugh and Play!

**Existing activities:**

**The Play of Painting:**

Discovered by Arno Stern, this activity allows a free self-expression and self-discovery, and respects the rhythms and uniqueness of each child, beyond all competitiveness. Claire and Sandrine have created their own ateliers of “Play of Painting” in Centerfield Kindergarten and Transition School, have also helped to create 2 others (Udavi School and Nandanam Kindergarten), and they have trained practitioners for the activity. Now they are ready to move a step further and have a special dedicated place allowing mixed aged groups (children and adults), thus participating in the development of Auroville as an educational place for an unending Youth. This new space will respect the required dimensions for an ideal unfolding of the “Play of Painting” and will have an archives room attached. For further information, refer to www.arnostern.com, or the book “Looking at children’s paintings in a new light” - 2009, based on research by Claire and co-written by Sandrine.

**Individual Play sessions:**

Yvelise started to develop this activity 9 years ago at the kindergarten (Centerfield), for children with unique needs and those who ask for individual attention. She offers a space wherein the child is free to discover himself through the medium of play (various games and toys are available, such as puppets, drawing materials, doll house, construction games, water and sand play...), free to express what he has to express, in his unique way. Yvelise accompanies the process by her presence and plays a role of “witness”. Her involvement varies according to the need of each child. Now she feels ready to offer this activity to children of Auroville as a whole.

**Recreational horse-riding for special needs and different-abled children:**

Marianne has worked many years as a teacher and is an experienced rider. 8 years ago, she developed the Persian Sky project at Red Earth Riding School. Persian Sky is her horse. Marianne
works with Laurence, an instructor, and a physiotherapist, both experienced riders, and other professionals in related fields interested in horse therapy. This activity consists of equine activities for physically and mentally different-abled children and children with special needs. An additional pony/horse will be Persian’s companion to cover a wider range of activities to help those who have emotional and relational issues.

The “World Game” or “Creations in the Sandbox”:
Aikya introduced “Creations in the Sandbox” at Deepanam School 7 years ago and since 3 years it is taking place at her home in the forest area of Auroville. This is a step towards having education and life closely linked together. The World Game is an invitation to create one’s own world in a tray filled with sand using figurines and objects from all cultures and newly imagined ones. It allows the child to become conscious of his creative potentialities.

Evolving games:
Life itself being a game in constant evolution, the rules evolve with and according to the public, on the basis of existing games. We also create new games. Respect, responsibility, autonomy, love and sharing are the basis of this activity.

Nature’s Theatre:
Anna offers an introduction to mathematics as a quality instead of only a quantity; a discovery of “the magic underlying simple shapes”. We construct geometrical figures, relate them to their number and character and learn to recognize them in ourselves and our surroundings. This activity develops into building in nature and theatre performances. From a first point, we create worlds.

Creation and publication of books and games:
Creating beautiful stories and new games for children, but also tools and books for educators are part of Lilaloka’s activities

Activities to be developed:

A specialized library for children, parents and educators
Claire and Sandrine will develop this part of the project. An original library will offer books selected for their uplifting qualities, children’s stories, books on new ways of education... and it will also be a place of creativity and imagination: storytelling, creation of stories and a Puppet Theatre. Some quiet games and audio CDs will also be available.

The magical garden
What could it be? A garden which awakes magic in oneself, wonder, deep discovery... A garden where soul qualities can be expressed: light, silence, truth, beauty, joy... And children and people who come to the garden would be supported, inspired to find their own little light within... Aikya will help creating this garden. Contact with nature is a source of peace, joy and discoveries. Lilaloka’s garden will play an important role. We will plant many trees and flowers, inviting an atmosphere of beauty and magic as well as fairies, elves and other friendly beings... Intimate corners such as a cavern with a waterfall, a small hill and a tree house will create a lively and mysterious world. Awareness activities on environment and nature will be offered (Nature’s Theater, gardening).

Lilaloka will also offer trainings in some of the activities. This will allow us to develop links with other educational organizations across India and the world, in order to share knowledge and enrich each other.

Other units and activities will be welcomed as Lilaloka grows: a music room, a games library, a hall for collective activities such as “Awareness through the body”, dance, aikido, singing, yoga,
relaxation, story telling…

**Activities 2011-2012:**

- Three new people, Anna, Aikya and Veronique, joined the group; a gradual integration process took place. One person, Saskia left the group.
- The previous architect had to go out of Auroville, so we went through the process of choosing a new architect which is now Meera.
- As a result we were reviewing all the buildings in detail and adapted the architectural project to the actual needs and situation.
- After this, we prepared the building application and it is now in the process at l’Avenir.
- The brochure (English and French) was totally reviewed, and the leaflet (English, French and Italian) and slideshow as well.
- The slideshow got translated into French.
- After all those detailed preparations we were also ready to present the project to the AVI centers during their visit in AV.
- Continuous efforts in fundraising were made and postcards were created for this purpose as well and are sold in the AV boutique.
- We now have enough funds to start the first phase of our project.
- A special game called Lilaloka was conceived.
- Research projects are in preparation.
- We also organized the cleaning of the allocated site/land and had a symbolic gathering with all members and well-wishers.
- We had some interactions with the neighbors in order to start building up a good relationship and to look for the future water source.
- For various reasons, we decided that the horses activity would happen in Baraka (old Fertile windmill), while still being part of Lilaloka’s activities.
- We started to gather playful materials for the construction.
- We had a meeting with SAIIER members to update on our project and to get clarity on the accounting part.
- We are now on the look for the right builder.
- We have weekly collective meetings and individual homework😊.

**The team**

![Image of the team]

*Left to right: Yvelise, Véronique, Anna, Aikya, Sandrine*

Marianne and Claire are also part of our team but are less active in this phase of our project. You can find a detailed presentation of each member in the brochure.
AUROVILLE SCHOOLS

SCHOLARSHIP AND EDUCATIONAL FUND

Aims and objectives:
The Scholarship & Educational Fund (SEF) serves the following purposes:

- To fund-raise and operate as a fund for education of Auroville youth inside and outside of Auroville.
- To help in creating educational and training opportunities inside and out-side of Auroville.
- To help in creating equality of opportunities for Auroville youth.
- To work towards finding optimal educational options in consideration of the needs and potential of the individual.

Executives & Support Group & Administration:
The team of SEF consists of Auralice Mira Graft (Aurodam), Kumar N. (Djaima), and Lucas Dengel (Grace) as executives, and of the following Aurovilians as support group members: Bobby Patel (Prarthna), Davaselvy Palani (Prarthna), Jean-Michel Argouin (Grace), Martina Ljungquist (Gaia), Palani K. (Prarthna), Satyen Tait (Centrefield), and Suryagandhi (Djaima).

Administration services are extended by the team members, and minor material expenses are covered by the commercial units of the executives and support group members.

Activities and mode of operating:
Students applying for financial support from SEF, have to fill an application form giving information on their educational background and their study plans, and of the financial background of their parents. Both parents are expected to work within Auroville.

Financial support is given by way of a loan that is expected to be paid back from five years after completion of studies onwards. It is understood that, in case the student subsequently returns to Auroville and contributes to Auroville’s development, this will be regarded as repayment in kind.

Applications are discussed in the SEF meetings conducted about once a month; in the FY 2011/12 fourteen meetings were conducted. Decisions on financial support require the agreement of at least two out of three executives and the absence of a disagreement to a decision. All decisions were made unanimously.

In October 2011, in collaboration with Future School, for a second time a three-day interaction with an experienced career counsellor was organized; about twenty-five students made use of her services.

SEF activities were made public with a mention in the <auroville.org> website. The monthly “Auroville Today” published an article on the SEF and its aims.

Funding:
In 2011/12 donations from Aurovilians and Auroville units have helped the SEF significantly in covering the financial needs, the biggest donation coming from Design Consultants/ Auroville CSR (Rs. 1,00,000/-).

For a second time, the SEF was supported by Stichting de Zaier (SdZ) i.e. with Rs. 3,11,151/-, and by Auroville’s Budget Coordination Council (BCC) / City Budget with Rs. 5,00,000/-.

A member of AVI Netherlands handed over a donation (Rs. 34,187/-) from a well-wisher in the Netherlands.
Applications assessed / students supported:

In the FY 2011/12 fourteen Auroville students were supported for their higher studies in colleges and universities, thirteen in India and one of them abroad. (These were Arun N., Auromeera N., Auroshakthi P., Bala T., Gayathri K., Kowalya S., Meena M., Nandhini K., Naveen K., Nitzan Merguei, Pavithra H., Pradyum R., Sathish S., Shembagam N.)

Six students of Future School were supported for undergoing British exams (these were Abirami A., Chandran s/o Jeff, Rosy S., Satya Damian, Savitri Kanehl, Subhasri S.,) and one student in outside schooling (Shanthi V.)

Four students received financial support from Auroville commercial units or from individuals via student-specific contributions. (These were Hemalatha & Chandru children of Palani, Aureka; and Gurudev I. of Brihaspathi Farm, for higher studies in India; and Elene Habte, for higher studies abroad.)
KAILASH RESIDENTIAL PROGRAM

This year has been a turning point for Kailash in terms of management.

As caretakers had to go abroad temporarily for personal reasons, new caretakers had to be appointed. For this matter, a new approach was introduced: former youth residents of Kailash have been requested to act as caretakers.

The idea was to complete the Kailash residents’ learning process by sharing the residence experience with the new residents. With this new step, former kailashians have an opportunity to re-evaluate their actions and attitudes in the light of their new responsible position.

The new residents can also share their feelings and issues with the “older brother” who went through very similar experiences. In this way, the advice and offered support is more grounded, more appropriate.

Four new caretakers were appointed, 2 of whom resigned the position after 3 months. They probably needed more time to be able to process their experiences and be able to communicate, transcend it.

With continuous help and back up by the initial caretakers through mails or short visits, the year went through very well. Both, residents and ex-resident/new caretakers enjoyed the experience. It will be renewed this year to see how much this practice can be finalized, upgraded and implemented permanently.

Kailash has also seen a lot of its long term inhabitants leaving for higher studies.

The Kailash clinic is still using part of the premises, waiting for their appointed space within the city.

Fortunately, the Cyclone Thane hasn’t destroyed any of the building structure. However, the garden has suffered from it. We are still working on putting it back together.
SAIER TRANSPORT SERVICE

ACTIVITY:

The Saiier Transport Service began in 1985-86. Over the years the service has endeavoured to create and maintain common transport facilities in Auroville. The bulk of its activities are geared towards school transport needs. It also maintains a bus service to Pondicherry for Aurovilians, Newcomers, and Guests. The Saiier Transport Service has 11 vehicles including 4 buses, 2 Tempo Travellers, 1 Jeep, 1 Tata Ace Mini Carrier and 1 Unicorn motor bike which are used for taking the children to and from school and sports five days a week, and for an occasional field trip. The transport also manages the Pondy trip for Aurovilians and guests who want to go to the ashram. Sometimes it also undertakes trips for Auroville cultural programs. The mini carrier daily picks up school lunch which is prepared at the Solar Kitchen and delivers it to all the schools and different parts of the community. In addition STS makes special trips for the elderly residents of Auroville.

The Saiier Transport Service has a new shed for vans, jeep and the food van. It was financed by Auroville Community Transport (ACT). There is also one small two wheeler parking shed. These are new buildings in addition to the existing buildings.

We also take care of Auroville community Transport (ACT) that consists of two mazda buses. There are 3 staff members for running the ACT vehicles. The mazda buses bring people from Pondy to Matrimandir daily. It also undertakes Pondy trips for Aurovilians every day.

GOAL:

In future when we get more vehicles we would like to expand our service to the community.
The Aikiyam playground was envisioned under its majestic banyan trees where the spontaneous play of the children has enlightened many hearts. However not all ages could grip the roots and swing like Mowgli in the jungle and the children aged 3 through 7 certainly needed a creative option for climbing and swinging and splashing-digging- and singing. We were sadly aware of the limited apparatus and the keen interest most children have to explore movement in space. So with the help of the Aikiyam School support group members, staff, a village playground manual and a creative architect the vision was born.

We hoped to keep modalities cost effective as well as maintain the natural elements of the banyan tree and village life. Village children are able to play with any material so this principle was taken into the planning. Balance beams and stepping stones were made from wood stumps (fantastic for balance, gross motor coordination and confidence), horizontal and vertical swings from tires (for vestibular function and flow), a creative climbing wall (gross motor coordination and planning) from donated ferro cement triangles, ladders from banyan roots and bamboo, a performance platform area (for outdoor classes), splash pool (specifically for water-play for the kindergarten), and sensory gardens (specifically for the creche where different textures are separated into pebble, soft sand, and rocks). This is to name a few of the modalities that were implemented.

Once completed the playground was introduced to the teachers and then learners. Teachers explored creative ways of using the space for learning outcomes. (For example, during the monsoon the water would travel through the carefully planned pebble beds creating a small river which is an opportunity to learn about the rivers of India. Carefully hidden objects like Krishna were placed around the banyan tree to be discovered which could be used as a game for visual memory.)

Teachers were encouraged to take ownership for the maintenance of the grounds and for its continued improvement. Learners were encouraged to also be involved in this process. Phase two of the playground hopes to bring a small slide, a labyrinth a tree house with bridge and ramp and extra swings.
The Tempest (by volunteer, Hazel Roy)
In October 2011, I came to Aikiyam School to work on a Shakespeare project, The Tempest, with the students and the teacher of standard 6. I was impressed early on with how well the teacher had prepared the students. They understood the plot of the play and had a good sense of who the characters were. Unfortunately they had no acting experience and this meant that developing acting skills in addition to creating a viable version of the play in so little time was a huge challenge.

Given that English is a very difficult language to master I had already created an adapted script which I hoped kept the poetry of the language but removed most of the obscure words. However it proved necessary to adapt much more as all the major parts would have to be played by actors with an average age of 11.

Rehearsals had to be squeezed into a school timetable and additional Sunday rehearsals were needed. The heavy rains frequently closed the school, children struggled trying to get their tongue round unfamiliar English dialogue and I struggled with trying to get them to act at the same time. My instinct was to discard the script and get them to improvise the situations and this proved the most successful in providing spontaneous performances.

Gradually we fought through the problems. We needed curtains, costumes, music, and a sound technician, which with perseverance, all came through. The teacher proved herself indefatigable, and considerably better humoured than her director at helping achieve the results.

All I can say about our cast, the students, who also included some children from standards 7 & 8 was that despite all the obstacles, they rose to the challenge magnificently. I was hugely proud of their final performance and very aware of the distance they had covered in such a short time. But I was also impressed with the warmth and acceptance I received from the staff at Aikiyam who are doing so much to broaden the horizons of pupils at the school. I can honestly say that I learned as much from them as they (hopefully) learned from me. I consider it a privilege to have worked with them all.
Peace Program through Art (by volunteer Deborah Howland Murry)

Building peaceful selves for a peaceful Aikiyam community was the focus of my 2-month project at the school, realized with much help from the regular Art teachers Ramalingam and Tia. We read many books and played lots of games whose messages helped us understand how to make good choices for positive interaction. Look around the campus and you will see the strong visual reminders we created of the non-violent, helpful people we, as teachers, staff and students, aspire to become. From the top of the dining hall, students’ and teachers’ peace flags painted in our “Peace of Art” room, send our prayers for peace into the world.

Our Appreciation Tree, gracing two outer walls of the kitchen area, is blooming leaves on which are written the names of students being recognized for some very positive acts. And, a new Community Code, the product of several teacher workshops, is painted on a central wall to reinforce expected behavior for the entire community. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi, we have begun working hard to “become the change we want to see in the world.”

Overall School Highlights
**Creche through Upper Kindergarten:** During this wonderful year the children learned about vegetables and fruits, vehicles, animals and birds, parts of the body, family, numbers (1-10) and shapes. Through the activity on vehicles they learned traffic rules, the names of various transport and travelled in them too. To enhance their creativity and develop their fine motor skills, we offered them an assortment of activities including clay work, writing on sand, threading beads, scribbling on boards, and ‘write letter dancing’. To develop their memory we used many puzzles and memory games. Through free-play they learned to draw and to be kind to other students. They learned how to behave appropriately in different situations. This year was a really successful year where students learned a lot and enjoyed their new experience in Aikiyam School.

**Standard 1:** The children learned a lot about vegetables and fruits. They were taught how to identify the vegetables and fruits and learn their various benefits. They had lots of fun while doing this project work, including colouring, reading and writing. They had an opportunity to taste all the fruits and vegetables we talked about. The children were very enthusiastic to present the programme to their parents, friends and to Aikiyam School well-wishers. Also, the children developed listening skills, good pronunciation and conversation skills by the teacher speaking first and then the children speaking aloud after. They learned the sound and name of the letters, then rhyming words, and joining words [conjunctions]. They recited word games like cat, mat, rat and simple sentences and songs: “The cow is black and the goat is white,” and “If you’re happy and you know it, clap your hands.” The children learned many stories and songs, for example Peter Rabbit, The Three Bears, 3 Billy Goats Gruff and songs like “Sri Krishna”, “The driver on the Bus”, and “Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star”. The children were introduced to a picture dictionary, and then they made their own.

**Standard 2:** We focused on their reading, writing and speaking skills. According to their needs and expectations we designed our programs and taught the lessons and practised the exercises. We covered some of the basic grammar skills like singular and plural, present and past, adjectives, opposites, rhyming words, and sentence-making. We put all our effort to improve their language skills through many types of activities using a variety of teaching techniques. In Mathematics we paid special attention to addition and subtraction, and multiplication tables from 1 to 10. The students were given work on time, and division exercises. For all subjects the students were assessed after every unit and at the end of each term. After assessment we
confirmed that they were capable of grasping the mathematical terms and were ready for the next level.

Standards 2 & 3: This year the students suggested and chose their topic which was “Sea creatures”. Through this project, the students learned about the names, types and sizes of sea creatures as well as how to care for them, how much water they drink and how high they jump, how fast, how far and how deep they swim, how they give birth to their young, the uses of them, why they smell bad and why they die when they are out of water. They had an outing to the sea shore and trip to the zoo; did craft and collage work; also drawing, stitching, and colouring; made clay models and worked with wood. They did 5 different types of book-making on sea creatures in Tamil and English. And they gave a puppet show and a fashion show, performed an action song and a creative play, wrote riddle and charts, and did work with shells. The children’s sea creature project work was posted on walls and displayed in the classrooms. For example, there was a fish tank, picture puzzles, clay models, and a wide variety of works in collage, book-making, and drawing. Displayed were books that were collected from various places, and the children's folders, worksheets and files.

Standard 4: The students this year learned many new things through a wide variety of activities and projects. In “The value of Flowers” they learned flower colours, design, shapes. They painted their faces with powder, natural colour, and learned how to make juice and some medicine, decorations and recipes. For “The River’s Tale” the children visited the beach and observed valves. At a government school in Periyamudaliarchavady our students met the 4th standard class and talked about water and, for example, waters different colours; also how people use water, what water is safe to drink, what is not. During the project on “Birds” we made a tree, a nest, clay model eggs and collected more information about birds from our school library. During the activity, “Eating Together” the children experienced a variety of food. We sat together in class and tasted them. They learned about different foods and tastes. Finally, in “Pochampalli” the students learned about how threads become cloth.
Standard 5 students did a project on Peruadaiyar Kovil in Tanjore. The students pursued their studies with a lot of interest. On 10th December we went to Tanjore, Tharaswaram and Kangai Konda Sozhabaram with the 6th and 7th grades. At the end of the project the students knew a lot more about the temple. This year the volunteer Deborah did a project on “Peace”. Each student made a peace flag along with all the other students, teachers, and staff. They made a “Book of Directions” in English class with the regular teacher Sathiya, and volunteer Siri. They acted very well in a play about “Panchali Sapatam” in their Social class.

Standard 6: The students enjoyed several educational field trips this year. In November they visited Vedanthangal, the bird sanctuary. The purpose of visiting Vedanthangal was that they had some related topics in their Tamil lesson. The second trip was to Tanjore. This was part of their social and Tamil class. The students had an exciting and challenging project in their English class. They chose “Shakespeare and his works” as their project topic. They performed one of Shakespeare's plays titled, 'The Tempest' which had been adapted by a volunteer from the UK, Hazel Roy, a professional theatre director. Hazel spent 6 weeks with the children teaching them how to act and interpret the text. After their 6-week intensive training the class performed Hazel's adaptation of “The Tempest” to the school one afternoon and then gave another performance to friends and family the next day.

Standard 7 & 8 students: During the first term of this academic year the 8th grade went to Kamaraj Agriculture Research Centre to learn about crop production and management. We learned how to use organic fertilizers and bio-fertilizers e.g. Pseudomonas bacteria and Tricoderma fungi. We are following these organic principles in our own organic garden on campus. This year we’ve had seminars and quiz programmes. The 7th and 8th graders went together to Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve to see the wildlife conservation programme. They also went to Mudumalai Wildlife Centre Sanctuary. Our 8th grade students participated in the Inter-School Science Exhibition conducted by Asset Centre Auroville in Parvender School, Alankuppam.

At the end of this year we are going to the Birla Planetarium in Chennai to see a show about our solar system. Some of the students are showing a lot of progress in Science. Students also have attended Art classes (specialized in painting) after school hours. All the students are going to attend the National Integration Camp to be held at Nainital in the month of May. All around, this has been another successful year.

Supportive Learning at Aikiyam School (Special Needs takes a new name)
We have changed the name of the Special Needs program at Aikiyam to Supportive Learning, which more accurately describes what we are trying to do. “Supportive Learning” puts the focus...
on the action rather than the person. The purpose of the Supportive Learning program at Aikiyam is to provide instructional expertise and activities which will enable children to learn effectively, with activities tailored for their particular strengths and weaknesses. It is joyful learning with a focus and for a purpose. Aspects of the Supportive Learning program may be found in any classroom at Aikiyam and in special activities, such as field trips and certain designated classrooms as well.

**The Aikiyam School Library**

This academic year we enriched students’ learning by providing different innovative, interesting and inspiring educational games once a week during the lunch break. As usual, all classes visited the library once a week. During lunch break some students were engaged in educational games, while others browsed the Internet, listened to audio books, or watched short videos. All the library books (approximately 12,000) are now registered in the current database. Over the summer break they will be transferred onto PMB (PhpMyBibli), a new open source cataloguing system. Because of the completed book registration we were more easily able to support volunteers and class teachers to execute their chosen projects. The coordinator of the library team helped with the re-classification of the books by colour coding.

**Aikiyam School Statistics:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number of students enrolled</th>
<th>226</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of new students enrolled</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nationalities represented</td>
<td>Indian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of student graduated</td>
<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number which left for other reasons</td>
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<tr>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of part-time staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aurovilians on maintenance</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings or other construction work begun</td>
<td>None (what about the playground?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings or other new construction completed</td>
<td>Dining hall/kitchen renovation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type of classes</td>
<td>Tamil, English, Mathematics, Science, Social Science, Political Science, History, Geography, Physical Education, Art, Civics, Carpentry, Embroidery, Tailoring, Computer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ARULVAZHI (“Way of Grace” in Tamil) is an Education Centre situated near Promesse Community of Auroville. It caters to the educational and cultural needs of children aged 3 to 18 years of the neighboring village, in the light of the teachings of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. Over the years it has expanded its scope to serve as a platform for its interaction with the delegates from different parts of Tamilnadu and Auroville. The aim is to provide value based education in an atmosphere of simplicity, beauty, joy and harmony wherein the children can develop naturally.

**Goals and objectives:**

We are inspired by one of the Mother’s Messages which states, “In a general way, education, culture, refinement of the senses are the means of curing movements of crude instincts, desires and passion. To obliterate them is not curing them; instead they should be cultivated, intellectualized, refined. That is the surest way of curing them. To give them the maximum growth in view of the progress and development of consciousness, so that one may attain to a sense of harmony and exactitude of perception is a part of culture and education for the human being.”

This objective is gained by following the guidelines of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo on Education, "To love to learn is the most precious gift that one can make to a child, to learn always and everywhere....."’'....the finest present one can give the child would be teaching him to know himself and to master himself.”
Our students are from the village and we are trying to follow the guidelines giving them a wide range of practical experience.

**Groups and Activities**

Arulvazhi has six areas of activities:
1) Kindergarten group for 20 children aged 3 to 6 years
2) Primary stage group children for 40 children
3) Computer group for 12 children
4) Special yoga asana group for 35 children
5) Adolescent girls group (12 to 17 years) of 20 children training in asanas, cultural expression, health education, and social awareness particularly in relation to gender problems
6) Puduulagam group for about 15 children

**Group I.** Kindergarten: Importance is given to the use and development of the sense organs. Along with this is added the cultivation of discrimination and of aesthetic sense, capacity to choose what is beautiful, simple, healthy and pure.

**Group II:** 6-12 years
For the second group, apart from free hand exercises, sports and games, special emphasis is laid on asanas. The children are encouraged to practice and develop indigenous forms of art, folk songs, stage plays, etc.

**Group III:** Classes in computer training are conducted between 4 to 6 PM.

**Group IV:** Special yoga asana classes are conducted from 6.30AM to 7.30AM, in which about 35 children participate. Both boys and girls are given equal importance in all respects.

**Group V:** Adolescent girls group (12 to 17yrs) of 20 children are trained in asanas, cultural expression, health education and social awareness, particularly in relation to gender problems.

**Group VI:** (Puduulagam group) 12-17 years
These children attend games, and receive academic education from 5.00PM to 8PM.

**Special Annual Activities:**

1. 4th April is the anniversary of Sri Aurobindo’s arrival in Puducherry. It was celebrated in the centre with readings in Tamil from his writings.
2. In May, 2011, a summer camp was organized for the students. Various resource persons gave their valuable contribution. Videos on Swami Vivekananda’s life, Agastiyar and Krishnavatara, Ramayana were shown. The students explored the nearby village area and also visited Chennai (planetarium, zoological park etc.). At the end of the camp, a cultural presentation was made by the participants.
3. In June and July, the normal activities of the centre were carried out -- Savitri classes in Tamil were started and continued throughout the year every Saturday by Sudarshan and Bhuvanasundari.
4. In August, Sri Aurobindo’s birthday and India’s Independence Day was celebrated on the 15th August, 2011 with the hoisting of the National Flag in the Centre and with a cultural event. Students and teachers attended the science exhibition organized by the Agastya Foundation in Chennai.
5. In September, Teachers’ Day was celebrated on 5th, the students honoring the teachers. Ganesh Chathurthi was celebrated and the psychological and inner significance of the day and how it played an important role in the freedom struggle was explained.
6. In September-October, Navarathri festival was celebrated and its inner significance was explained. Deepavali festival, its inner significance, the all-India nature of the festival was explained to the students.
7. In October 2011, our students went on a tour to Trichi and Tanjavur and gave an asanas demonstration in Trichi.
8. In November ‘11, Children’s Day was celebrated. 17th November is the Mahasamadhi Day of the Mother and the students visited the Mother’s and Sri Aurobindo’s Rooms, paying homage to Them.

9. On 1st December, our students participated in the Yogi Ramsurat Kumar’s birth anniversary celebrations in Rani Meyyammal Hall, in Chennai and gave a short presentation on “Love and Oneness” which was much appreciated. Christmas was celebrated. In Mother’s words, it was the festival of the return of the Light in earlier days.

10. Tamil Nadu’s premier festival of Pongal was celebrated with enthusiasm. On 26th January, Republic Day was celebrated by flag hoisting and a cultural event.

11. February is a special month because of the Mother’s birthday on 21st, Auroville’s birthday on 28th, and Supramental Day on 29th February. The teachers and the students attended a number of programmes giving them a practical experience of human unity in the international city of Auroville. The students attended the Science Exhibition organized in Auroville, wherein their peers from outside schools participated and there was a good interaction with all.

12. In March, four delegates from Arulvazhi were deputed to go to Agastya Foundation to get trained in the interactive educational tools of education and their experience was shared with the students.

13. 29th March is the anniversary day of the first meeting of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo. It is also the annual day of the centre. The dance drama on the significance of the Supramental Day was staged in the Centre for the benefit of the parents, and the delegates of the seminar organized by the Tamil Heritage Centre, which was well appreciated.

14. The staff participated in five seminars and workshops organized in collaboration with the Tamil Heritage Centre on the themes from Sri Aurobindo’s teachings, wherein delegates from Tamilnadu, Puducherry and Auroville participated.

15. Sports competitions were organized in March and prizes distributed to successful students. However all those who participated received consolation prizes.

16. During the year, our yoga students gave demonstrations of their skills in Sadhana Forest, Chingalpet Sri Aurobindo Centre and in Moratandi during Dr. Ambedkar’s birth centenary celebrations. Our yoga teacher gave training to the children of Meera Women’s Group children on Saturdays.

17. During the year, the project “Life in Another Dimension” was started by Syamala along with Muthumari, an Aurovilian from the local area and Revathy, a newcomer Aurovilian from Bangalore. The project included visits to jiva samashi places of saints and siddhars in the area in and around Puducherry, which brought interesting sharing and insights.

Mala, one of our teacher trainees passed the B.A. Degree Exam of the Tamil Nadu Open University with a first class. Our Aurovilian yoga teacher, Velmurugan is appearing for the post-graduate diploma examination in yoga education and teaching of the Annamalai Open University this year.

Outcome:

As our approach is on value based education giving exposure to the students and teachers to various Auroville and Ashram activities, and an opportunity for them to participate, they get the influence of the ambience and the result is seen in the family life of the students with greater respect, harmony and adjustment. They are able to feel an improvement in their quality of life. This is quite visible when their relatives and friends visit them from other rural areas. The psychic is touched through diverse points in the outer being. The strength of our school program is to see that a large a number of such points are covered as possible and offered to the students freely. We make a small attempt in this direction.

Other goals:

Due to the four lane national highway project, a major part of the Centre was demolished. Since then the Centre is relocating its activities to another space. Due to the Thane Cyclone, the fence and trees were damaged. A major portion of the fence has since been repaired.
ILaignarkal School Statistics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl.no.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Year (2011-2012)</th>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Students graduated</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Number of part-time staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Resources persons</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Aurovillians on maintenance</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Introduction:

Our alternative prototype school is imparting life education programmes and development of essential skills mainly to the workers of Auroville and their wards. We can accommodate a maximum of 50 learners with the available space, teaching materials and other facilities provided.

Our Vision:

- To contribute in achieving the Dream of the Mother in this millennium.
- To help Auroville city and its neighbourhood to co-evolve in achieving development goals.
- To include in our vision: Learning, research, value-appreciation and leadership.

Our Motto......

- Work hand-in-hand.
- Learn together joyfully.
- Enjoy the cultural richness.
- Live in peace and harmony

Mission of Our School:

- To provide increased education opportunities for each age group, mainly youth (15 and above), appropriate to their specific needs, and increase training facilities to gain a greater range of vocational skills, communication skills and improve income generating capacities.

- To be a bridge between the Auroville City and its neighbourhood through education programmes, cultural activities and healing.

- To carry on research in Tamil, the language of this region, as well as one of the four languages for Auroville schools as suggested by The Mother; develop teaching methods and materials particularly suited to first and second generation learners in collaboration with local, national and international educational institutions.

- Disseminate the materials in order to increase the ability of teachers and managers of functional schools in life skills and to promote youth leaders in reactivating the existing rural social institutions: thereby contributing to rising standards in the alternative schools. To put in a nutshell, our school aims to realize the principle ‘Education for All’ with the unending education inspiration imbibed from The Charter of Auroville.
OUTREACH SCHOOLS

- To include all educational initiatives and methods which build self-awareness, self-esteem and self-confidence in order to draw out, develop, support community leadership and involvement capacities in working students, youth, teachers, parents and staff by providing channels to be constantly in touch with their higher aspirations, and co-evolve with the universal city, Auroville.

- To provide improved, harmonious and beautiful physical resources which will have a multiple effect on the above objectives. The mission remains the same—to give exposure to young people on the Ideals of Human Unity as envisaged by The Mother in the Charter of Auroville.

Has the mission changed in the last year? Why and how?

The mission remains the same but we have programmes created to rededicate ourselves to achieve our goals and to promote among the people of the Auroville development sector sustainable integrated development through educational partnership and whole village management that make a real difference in their lives creating a leadership, illumining self-esteem and initiative for upliftment.

Ilaignarkal Education Centre is recommitted to make a wonderful contribution towards a harmonious society - a bridge between Auroville residents and its workforce from the neighbourhood. It has provided free office space for SEWA (a Unit of Auroville Service Trust) to strengthen employer - employee relations.

Highlights- activities 2011-12

- **Publications**

  12 issues of the monthly Tamil news letter ‘Auroville Seydhi Madal’ - 8-10 pages are published regularly. It is well received by a wider circle of readers which is increasing every year. Most articles are on Tamil culture, history, the words of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother; bilingual language programmes, literary letters, and biographies on great personalities; creative writing, research articles. Children’s corner, book reviews and Auroville regional special positive news etc. are other features.

  We circulate our monthly newsletters to many friends of Auroville, libraries, literary associations and research centres serving in the fields of organic farming, herbal plantation, natural colours, social welfare, childcare, Tamil literature, culture & yoga. Nearly 40 publishers send their complementary copies to our library on exchange. It is on the increase every year. We are distributing printed copies to a large circle of friends all over Tamil Nadu, Pondicherry and Auroville region in particular.

  We had researched and collected materials on Thirukkural by St. Thiruvalluvar of second century - Sangam age. We have assisted Tamil Heritage Centre to bring out a bilingual book of Thirukkural as a reference material for all Tamil lovers and students.

  Sri Aurobindo in his book, ‘The Foundation of the Indian culture’ refers to the Thirukkural as ‘the Gnomic Poetry, the greatest in plan, conception and force of execution ever written in this kind, of the Tamil Saint, Tiruvalluvar’.

  Dr. Albert Schweitzer, Nobel Laureate, notes that, “there hardly exists in the literature of the world a collection of maxims in which we find such lofty wisdom as in Tirukkural”

  India’s father of the nation, Mahatma Gandhi, notes, “I wanted to learn Tamil only to enable me to study Valluvar’s Tirukkural through his mother tongue itself….. It is a treasure of wisdom...”
Video Documentary on “Use of Bicycle” directed by C. Arunan and R. Krishna and supported by staff and students of Ilaignarkal won many awards in Chennai at university level and national documentary film festival for students.

Viyazha vattam (Thursday circle - weekly congregation)

Every Thursday evening we read classical Tamil works. Listen to lectures by Tamil scholars. These books are reviewed by staff and students. This year the study circle specialized in the classical literature of Tirukkural of Sangam period authored by Thiruvalluvar.

Our efforts of learning the Tirukkural for 12 months gave us the strength to take up a project in Auroville with the backing of Tamil Heritage Centre for a full day seminar on Tirukkural for students of Tamil literature, local youth and workers of Auroville all age groups numbering 225. Nearly 25 scholars and academicians, our staff and students of Ilaignarkal and friends of Viyazhavattam put their best efforts in collaboration with Tamil Heritage Centre, Bharat Nivas and made the one day people’s symposium a success.

Thirukkural - bilingual book was released by Dr. B.R.M. Subramaniam, Department of English, Dravidian University, Kuppam, Andhra Pradesh, who is also a scholar in Sri Aurobindo's writings.

Best Youth Award 2011

Best youth award was conferred on poet C. Arunan by Sri. Tekeste G. (Ethiopia) a senior Aurovillian.

Our visits and tours

- All staff and students visited All India Handicrafts Exhibition at Velsokkanathar Hall, Pondicherry, to gain knowledge on Indian cottage – home industries mainly managed by women-folk. They represent the true cultural heritage of India.

- Visited Pondicherry Vedapurieswar Siva temple hall exhibition on native clay pottery doll making and sale by local artisans.

- Saaram women’s group gave a guided tour to friends from Holland. They went to Chidambaram (Temple devoted to The Dance of Siva) observed Natyanjali- Festival of Classical dances of India in the temple corridor.

Summer special (April and May 2011)

- Children’s summer classes: 25 children of Auroville workers attended classes during summer vacation. Classes on arts, crafts and languages were conducted. Group activities with folk games, riddles and slogans were introduced. Group singing was practiced. Identification of herbal plants, native birds and insects became part of their everyday observation classes.

- Summer camp participants celebrated a gala finale inviting parents and guests. They presented an exhibition of the posters and charts created during the summer camp.

Children and parents-educare programme

February 2012 Mrs. Germana who is a representative from our Italian friends circle supporting girl children’s health and educational care through Ilaignarkal, visited parents
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of 17 children and had a good time together. The children’s progress and total development were discussed. Two new girl children were added this year.

Twice a month, on child – parent “Educare” group numbering 25 meets at our school and discusses health education and social awareness programmes related to child care with particular reference to girls, selected from Auroville villages. Presently these children are from seven villages around Auroville.

❖ Meaningful festivals and celebrations

On 5th September 2011: Ilaignarkal students celebrated Teachers’ day by honouring their teachers. It looked like a vedic school - Guru sikhya ashram of yesteryears. Students sat in front of their teachers one to one and got their blessings and autographs.

Navarathri Kolu (dasara) - Festival of evolution was celebrated in October - the annual feature of our school. A large class room was decorated; dolls were organized thematically by students to express their creativity and progress. Hundreds of school children, friends and parents visited the doll show for ten days. It was a gala colourful festival dedicated to learning hospitality, unity, creativity and sharing.

Annual Children’s Book Fair 2011 - 12 was conducted in our school campus in collaboration with Tamil Heritage Centre. More than 3000 children with their teachers, parents and friends visited the Fair. More than one lakh books were displayed on the racks for the children to see, touch, feel, read and buy. Workshops on book reading, reviewing, storytelling, creating poetry and handicrafts were conducted by the experts.
On Saturday 24th March 2012 at SAWCHU building in Bharat Nivas a one day children’s theatre workshop on Tagore literature was conducted by Tamil Heritage centre to mark the 150th birth anniversary of Tagore. Dr. Velu Saravanan, School of Performing Arts, Pondicherry University, was the facilitator of this programme. Our school staff and students hosted the full day events. It enriched the histrionic talents of the participants.

On Sunday 25th March 2012 a one day seminar on Thirukkural - people literature was conducted by Tamil Heritage Centre in collaboration with Viyazha vattam group of our school. 200 participants from all over Tamilnadu and Pondicherry shared their experiences in learning the values from the great book.

**Personality development courses**

Three day special courses for the following interest groups were conducted every four months.

- **First quarterly - June:** Ten household workers underwent a special course on health and hygiene. Our staff Mr. Anandou conducted classes on *yoga and body awareness*.

- **Second quarterly - September:** Twelve youth working in various construction sectors in Auroville attended a *pranic healing* course conducted by our visiting lecturer Sri T. Rajagopalan, Trichy.

- **Third quarterly - December:** Eight senior women workers of Auroville attended body awareness programme. Arulvazhi school yoga teacher Sri. Velmurugan conducted the classes and taught them simple *yoga asana* and breathing exercises for a healthy life.

- **Fourth quarterly - March:** Children and youth associated with our school numbering 60 participated in a disaster management course to prevent forest fire, first aid, home nursing, health food, prevention against communicable diseases, use of locally available herbs etc. by Sri P. Prushothaman (Popu) a specialist in health food management.
The school has launched a project- a study on utilization of renewable energy to economize the consumption of power for various day to day activities in the campus in collaboration with Auroville Sunlit Future, Auroville Electrical Service and specialists i.e Sri Toine van Megen and team. The school campus has become a demonstration unit - a model for Solar Power System.

**Difficulties**
- The campus got affected by the cyclone-Thane in December 2011 and January 2012. We have yet to repair the fence, damaged window glass panels and waste water recycling system. The garden area needs a facelift. Landscaping also needs attention.
- The needs of students are more. Our resources are limited. We have to find resourceful persons to meet the challenges and lead the project further especially in the area of computer training, Accountancy and Finance management.

**Comments**
- One of our senior students, an Aurovilian, is back in our school to participate in improving the facilities and beautifying the campus. It is a Divine arrangement.

Sri. Jan Peter, from Holland, has arranged a special donation to our school in appreciation of our service in the field of life education. We record our sincere thanks to Jan Peter and family for their deep concern and love for the youth of Auroville region.
ISAIAMBALAM SCHOOL

School Statistics:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of students enrolled</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of new students enrolled</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students graduated</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number which left for other reasons</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of full-time staff</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buildings or other construction work begun</td>
<td>Kitchen and Dining Hall</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aim /Mission:

Creation of a learning environment in which the students and the teachers reach their highest mental and spiritual potential possible for one’s level, so as to live, learn, teach and function from there.

Effective and successful application of the educational principles of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother through appropriate educational methods for educating rural students and dissemination of the knowledge of the process of this successful application to the teaching community inside and outside Auroville.

Specific Objectives:

1. Creation of a Model School imparting education up to the 7th standard level where mainly Alternative Educational Methods, incorporating the educational principles of Sri Aurobindo and Mother, will be used for enabling its students to achieve their educational objectives and to realize their educational potential to the maximum possible extent.
2. Creation of a Teacher’s Training Centre where teachers will be trained in the effective use of these Alternative Educational Methods.
3. Creation and implementation of a short-term course for a practical learning of Conscious Self-Development based on Sri Aurobindo’s Evolutionary Perspective of Human Life on Earth and the Process of Evolution, and offering it to the students, the teachers and others, who wish to follow a conscious process for progressing in their path towards perfection.

Highlights of this year:

(a) LEARNING OF THE CHILDREN
In this year separate learning programme for each of the 105 students was written and implemented. Learning programme for each of the students contained (1) Essential knowledge content appropriate to his/her age and level, (2) Other knowledge or skill content for which he/she had inclination, aptitude or special talent, (3) Essential psychological life skills, (4) Further skills or knowledge he/she wanted to acquire.

Ponni & Vaigai Groups (Preschool level, 3 to 4+ years): 36 children (21 Boys and 15 Girls)
Learning Programmes for these children contained activities for the 8 kinds of development at the preschool level. Among them was the Cognitive development, for which Glenn Doman method (Word Flash Cards method) was used. For the other developments weekly or fortnightly thematic projects were used.

Out of the 36 children, learning programmes for 15 of them could be completed by 85% and for 13 of them completed by 60 to 70%. In the process of implementing the learning programmes 19 projects designed around 24 themes were used. In the Cognitive Development part of the programme, for which Glenn Doman method was used, the maximum number of Tamil and English words learnt was 400 to 600 by 6 children, 250 to 300 words by 15 children and 100 to
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150 words by 5 children. For the remaining 10 children, we had given Montessori activities. They had learnt the meaning of 200 to 300 English words on seeing the picture. All the 36 children enthusiastically participated in pursuing creative activities.

This year our pre-school teachers got new ideas to observe the free play activities of the children, identify their learning difficulties and, by using online websites and other resources, to work out ways to overcome them. They were able to consolidate the learning plan and its result.

Apart from this, use of a new learning software called Brilliant Kids programme to facilitate the use of Word Flash Cards method started from February 2012. This software enables the child to learn the meaning of 1000 English words through animation and pictures, and then to read those words. The use of this software was so organized that the preschool children spent just 10 minutes a day for this learning leaving them plenty of time to pursue other learning activities. Almost all the preschool children enthusiastically responded to this kind of learning. Towards the end of the year the preschool children did a project on Beach Trip to consolidate the learning of new English words and acquire spoken English skills using them.

Narmadha Group (Primary level - 1st std - 4th std.): 39 students (24 Boys and 15 Girls)
For implementing the learning programmes, teachers of this group used ABL (Activities-Based Learning) Cards with its ladder system, Phonics Method for Reading, computer educational CDs, project works, etc.

At the 1st and 2nd standards 1st part of the learning programme pertaining to essential knowledge content was 100% completed except for 3 students. The second part of the programme was completed by 50%. At the 3rd and 4th level the 1st part of the learning programme was completed by 90 to 95% for 6 students, 70% for 4 and 35% for 2 students. The second part of the programme was completed by 70% for 7 students. The third part was written only for 5 students and completed by 40%. The fourth part of the programme was completed by 45% for 3 students.

Gangai Group (UP, Middle levels - 5th, 6th and 7th stds.) 14 students (9 Boys & 5 Girls)
At the beginning of August 2012, 7 students who were studying at the 8th level had to leave the school and get enrolled in mainstream schools as there was no public examination conducted by Tamil Nadu Government at that level any more. As this announcement came at the end of July, they all left the school in August and were enrolled in outside mainstream schools.

For the remaining 7 students, Learning Programmes for Tamil and English was completed by 90%
for 5 students, 60% by 2 students. For Tamil they were 90% completed for 4 students, 60% for 3 students. For Maths they were 80% completed for 5 and 40% by 2 students. For science and social science they were completed by 70% for 4 students and by 40% for 3 students.

The 2nd part of the learning programme was completed by 70% for 7 students. It consisted of problem-solving, leadership skill, communication skill, organisation skill and creative skill. 5 students were able to take responsibility for completing their learning plan.

The 3rd part of the learning programme was completed 75% by six students (handling the computer, drawing and acting).

The 4th part of the programme was completed 70% by 3 students, 60% by 4 students.

In the last 3 months of the academic year, an intensive effort was taken to solve all their learning difficulties in a focussed manner for all the primary and middle level students. Students were encouraged to take up self-improvement efforts based on removing their learning difficulties in a stipulated time. They were helped to work this out in a systematic manner by noting down the difficulties to be tackled every day and the outcome of their efforts. Use of computer CDs and online educational websites immensely facilitated this effort.

As a result, at the upper primary level, as only 5 students out of 14 were really qualified for their level, the remaining 9 students started making efforts to qualify for their level. Among them, 7 students were 3 months behind their level and 2 students 12 months behind. Through focussed self-improvement efforts the 7 students covered up their 3 months deficit in their learning and the 2 students could cover up only 3 months.

(b) INVOLVING THE PARENTS IN THE LEARNING OF THEIR CHILDREN
1. There were 7 Parent-Teacher meetings, with the parents of the preschool and primary students. Among them 2 meetings were conducted as workshops. The workshops enabled them to learn what kinds of development are acquired by their children in the school and what learning activities are given for what kind of development. Parents enthusiastically participated in the learning process in the workshop and expressed their wish to have more such workshops for them from the school. It was a rich learning experience for all of them. In those workshops 11 parents of the preschool demonstrated what they had taught their children at home.

(c) RESEARCHES AND IMPROVEMENTS IN THE EDUCATIONAL METHODS USED IN THE SCHOOL
1. This year we organized a programme to find the initial learning difficulties and find solutions for removing them. At the preschool level we introduced innovative activities and programmes to complete the use of Glenn Doman method with ease and joy, and well before they entered the first standard. The software from Brilliant Kids Org website immensely helped in facilitating this effort.

2. At the preschool and primary level effective innovations were made in introducing the 42+ phonemes and graphemes in English language to the students. Software called The Ultimate Phonics, from Spencer Learning.com website, containing more than 5000 words, helped the teachers introduce decoding skills to the students with ease. The software contained words decoded phonemes and syllables which the students could hear. The students were encouraged to use this programme whenever they needed to decode words. As and when they came across words which they could not read they went to the computer on their own, used the software and learnt how to decode their words correctly.

(d) TRAINING RECEIVED BY THE TEACHERS
1. Kavitha, Nirmala and Shankar participated in a workshop, conducted by Pondicherry Science Forum, to teach students how to read books and learn from them.

2. Subash conducted a half-day workshop about formative and summative assessment. This workshop was based on the reports prepared by PISA (Programme for International Student
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Assessment. The teachers were given some test questions given by PISA to assess reading literacy, mathematical literacy and scientific literacy of students from some 50+ OECD countries. Each of them was requested to discuss the process of solving their test questions. The outcome of the discussion amazed the teachers to a great extent. They got a first-hand experience of the things that are really assessed in these subjects. They all expressed their wish to design new ways to assess themselves and their students. It was decided to focus our efforts in this direction in the coming academic year.

3. All the teachers attended Heidi Watts’ and Gene Gordon’s workshop on “Using English in the Classroom.”

4. Kavitha participated in a workshop conducted by Torin Finser on Integral and Waldorf Education.

5. Tamizh Vani and Vasantha Rani attended 2 half-day workshops for pre-school development activities at New Creation School conducted by Megan.

(e) USE OF SCHOOL’S RESEARCH WORK BY OTHERS

1. 5 teachers from Samiyathal English Convent School in Salem received a 3-day training in the use of Phonics Method for Reading.

2. An in-service training in the use of Primary Level ABL Card System was given to 2 teachers of Pondicherry Multipurpose Social Service Society working in Karaikkal. This training was spread over the entire academic year. These teachers have succeeded in using these methods in their two learning centres in Karaikkal, which were established for the 100 students from the rehabilitated fisherman communities affected by tsunami. They have also succeeded in recreating the joyous and eager learning atmosphere of Isai Ambalam School there.

3. From Pondicherry ten teachers of Kothari Vidya Mandir and four teachers of Vani Vidyalaya, from Alankuppam three teachers of Vijayanjali English Medium School, and one teacher from Andre’s Free Progress School in Auroville received 3 day training in the use of Phonics Method for Reading.

4. Ten teachers from Kothari Vidya Mandir in Pondicherry received 3 day training in the use of Bilingual audio With Language Games method.

(f) PAPERS PRESENTED, AND SEMINARS OR CONFERENCES ATTENDED

1. In December Subash, Jaya and Lourde went to Rishi Valley School in Andhra Pradesh and
discussed with Mr. Padmanabha Rao about how to introduce ABL method to Ethiopia and use it there. In this connection Lourdes of Pitchandikulam showed a Power Point Presentation in the Auroville International meeting held in Ethiopia based on the ABL method used in Rishi Valley, Tamil Nadu and Isai Ambalam School.

(g) VOLUNTEERS AND VISITORS
1. Two teachers from Bangalore visited our school and discussed about Educational Alternative Methods.
2. Mr. Chitranjan from SSA Pondicherry visited our school.
3. Two teachers from Alcot School of Chennai visited our school.
4. Sandra and her friends from U.K. visited our school.
5. Jane from Saint Joseph School in Thirukkovilur visited our school and got the ideas of Glenn Doman to implement it in their schools.
6. Two teachers from Salem visited our school.
7. Mrs. Anitha Balasubramanian from Asha Learning Net group visited our school.

(h) SPECIAL EVENTS IN THIS YEAR
1. Parents of the students hoisted the flag on 15th August 2011 as well as on 26th January 2012.
2. Our children went to a Science exhibition conducted by Pondicherry Science Forum group at Puducherry.
3. All the children went to PIMS hospital for medical check up.
4. All the students participated in the Navarathiri Golu conducted by Ilaignarkal Education Centre.
5. Primary students conducted a year-long project in Windara Farm in Auroville and learnt about farming.
6. All the primary students participated in State Judo Championship programme at Puducherry. Three students got medals.
7. We celebrated sports for the preschool children and gave prizes to them.
8. All the children underwent dental check up through AV Health Centre group.
9. Preschool students went on an excursion to Kadapakkam.
10. Primary students went on an educational trip to Trichy and visited Kallanai, Srirangam Temple, Thiruvanaikaval Temple and Rock Fort Temple.
11. At the end of the second term a cultural performance by the students was presented. At the end of the academic year annual cultural performance by the students was given.
12. A five-week experimental project was conducted in Isai Ambalam School in May-June, 2011 for the students from the 4th to 8th level in Alankuppam area to train them to identify their learning difficulties in their subjects - Mathematics, Science and English Grammar and Social Studies - and to remove them by using computer educational CDs and online educational websites. We started this project because we felt that even though computers are being increasingly acquired by several rural schools their full potential with respect to the removal of learning difficulties, regularly faced by the rural students in their academic subjects, has not yet been fully recognized by the teachers and the educational authorities. We felt that this need should be addressed in an intelligent and appropriate way. We have already started storing in our computers all the relevant learning materials in all the subjects for this purpose. Fourteen students participated in this project. Out of them six students succeeded very well in fulfilling the aim of the project. All the students came to the school well before the start of the programme for the day and stayed till 4 PM. They said they were happy and felt confident after their learning difficulties were overcome. They profusely thanked the teachers and organisers for helping them in this process. We intend to do this project again next summer with 25 students.
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Goals and Achievements:

1. In fulfilling the Goal of Creating the Model School
   Designing Learning Programmes for all the students, implementing them and assessing their outcomes continued throughout the year. The speculated outcomes were achieved by 60%. Day by day, our teachers are becoming more skilled in designing and implementing the Learning Programmes.

2. In fulfilling the Goal of Creating a Teacher’s Training Centre
   In this year the dissemination of the process of using alternative educational methods for teaching/learning was given to 24 teachers from outside Auroville.

3. In fulfilling the Goal of Creating and Implementing a Practical Course on Sri Aurobindo’s Evolutionary Perspective of Human Life on Earth and the Process of Evolution.
   Nothing was done in this respect.
Tamil Ulagam Evening Schools

Introduction:

Tamil Ulagam Evening Schools are a joint collaborative project with Secours Populair France, Les Enfants de Pondy Patch and the Auroville outreach schools of SAIER. This project is a completely village oriented educational project. Les Enfants de Pondy Patch, through SAIER, has now raised the funds necessary to sponsor 120 children for their public education.

There are eleven Evening Schools in the villages surrounding Auroville. Here we provide a joyful learning atmosphere for the children to develop self-confidence and personal growth in an environment of freedom. Our subjects include Eye-Hand Coordination, Language, Painting, Drawing, Clay, Health and Hygiene, Journalism, History, Cultural Enrichment, Natural/Ayurvedic Medicine, Organic Gardening, Music Classes, Theatre, Yoga Asanas, ”Litter Free” clean up activities and raising awareness not to use plastics.

There are about 800 children between the ages of 6 to 14 years who are served by the Tamil Ulagam Evening Schools. Every school has an average of 2 - 4 teachers, plus regular external and visiting teachers for Yoga, Music, Cultural Enrichment, History, Natural/Ayurvedic Medicine, Language, Sports, Theatre, General Knowledge, Organic Gardening, Hygiene, Social awareness and much more. Auroville volunteers also contribute to the education.

Focus:

Each night, the evening schools start their classes using different ways of meditative and concentration techniques to bring the children’s focus to their evening program. The children can bring in their own stories to read, or without a script relate a story themselves to the whole group. They also read passages of Thirukkural and share its meaning with the class. Because they do this in front of the group, this helps them gain self-confidence and removes their fears and inhibitions, as wished by the Mother.

Organic Gardening

This year we are giving lessons and training to the children about the Organic Kitchen Garden. The children were invited to see the Botanical Garden, where they were shown all the different plants and their uses. A demonstration was given to show how to prepare the compost, and then how to plant and then replant seedlings. They were also shown an educational video about various native plants and trees, and shown the principals and importance of water harvest. After seeing this, we did a Practical Program at the Kottakarai Farm on Saturday and Sunday. The children were shown many things in practice: how to prepare the soil and build bunding, the different types of seedlings and how to replant them in the soil, watering, and the importance and methods of
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mulching. Together we planted many types of vegetables: Tomato, Ladies Fingers, Chillies, French Beans, Eggplant, Custard Beans, Cucumbers, and Pumpkins. They also learned how to weed the field that contained ragi, kambu and vargu. They were shown the rice field, and how to harvest peanuts. Because we gave them training, we all shared in the bounty when it was time for the harvest. The children were very, very happy and excited about the vegetables they got. In this way, the Evening Schools show the children the real-life satisfaction and results of learning, knowledge, and work. The Mother said it was very important to find joy in work.

Natural/Ayurvedic Medicine

In the village, the knowledge of Nature’s medicines is slowly disappearing after years of people turning to Homeopathy and Allopathy. While Homeopathy and Allopathy are valid, the knowledge of using medicinal plants is extremely important and must not be lost. Now we are reminding and re-teaching the children how to use Ayurvedic medicine. These plants grow naturally next to houses, or in other areas easy to access - free of charge. The children learn the various purposes for the plants, and how to properly prepare and use them.

For example, they are taught which plant is good for healing wounds, and which plant they could use to cure belly pains. They also learn which plants do not cause side effects. We have given one-month workshops on this topic, and each class receives this environmental education. Because of this, two of the schools’ children wrote an entire play on these topics! They themselves selected the student actors for each role, and with the help of the teachers made a theatre production. They invited the parents, family and villagers to their play, performing the story they created themselves from this knowledge.

In their play, the children promoted environmental awareness to show the profound effects that cutting trees has on the environment, which makes less rain fall. The audience was surprised and delighted with the play, the knowledge it contained for children, and their environmental message. This whole activity taught the children to think, to creatively develop their knowledge, to put the knowledge in action and to learn by teaching (acting), which is one of the most powerful ways to learn.

From this, the children learn not only practical medicinal knowledge, they also learn the value of their culture’s nature-based wisdom. They learned that it is possible to share the excitement of knowledge in a creative and enjoyable way.
Spiritual and Cultural Significance

In Tamil Nadu we have many festivals happening in the various regions. For example, Ganesh Pooja, Krishna Jayanthi, Saraswathi Pooja, Deepavali, Pongal, Ramzan and Christmas. For these festival days there is usually a holiday, but the children often do not understand the spiritual, cultural, or historical significance relating to these. In the Evening Schools, we teach them the full meaning of these days. The children are very happy to know about this, because it gives them a deeper understanding of their own richly fascinating and important culture. This understanding also makes them feel more connected, and gives them a fuller spiritual framework. This is in keeping with The Mother’s vision of Human Unity.

We also teach the children about important leaders who devote their lives for the service of the country. For example, we taught about the lives and achievements of eminent Indian people such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Dr. Ambedkar, E.V.R. Priyar, Annai Derasai, Kamaraj, and Indira Gandhi, just to name a few. We also teach about the lives and philosophies of Sri Aurobindo and The Mother. These are the people we encourage them to follow as an example. We are inspired by their morals and actions as we create our own lives. In this way, the Evening Schools teach that India produces many esteemed men and women, and the inspiring examples they show to be truly great in the world.

Silapathikaram Workshop

We brought the children to The Tamil Heritage Center in Auroville to partake in Silapathikaram workshops, conducted by Meenakshi Akka. More than 120 of our children participated in these workshops every day. It is the perfect occasion to learn from the Silapathikaram, a very important and old historical story in our country. The children were very happy to have participated in these workshops. They learned very much from it, and they would like to participate in more of these workshops in the future.

Recycle Bags Workshops

There was a workshop arranged by the AV Clean Up group to create bags and wallets from the waste tetra juice packs. They were been collected and been designed as wallets and bags for their use.
**Manavar Moorasu**

We are very happy to announce that the students are producing a newspaper, called “MANAVAR MOORASU” (STUDENT NEWSPAPER). In all eleven schools, the students are collecting the information themselves: some of it they read from different books, and some children submit stories they have invented themselves. Poetry composition, question-and-answer, quiz programs, and stories. Sometimes it’s a factual story, some stories are creatively written, and some stories are favorites, like folklore. All of these writings, entirely in Tamil, are sent from all 11 schools to the editing teacher. After the material has been edited, he publishes it in the newspaper “MANAVAR MOORASU” and sends it out to all the schools.

The children are amazed to see their own work published, and to see their own names and those of the schools alongside their articles. They are reading their newspapers out loud in the classroom itself, which they then take home to read and share. Because of this, the children are learning the value of information and creativity. They are also seeing tangible results of their own work and developing skills in writing, information gathering and publishing.

**Yoga Asanas**

For three years now, yoga teachers are visiting all of the evening schools to teach the children Yoga Asanas. When Yoga is taught to young people, it benefits many areas of their lives, for the rest of their lives. The children are very happy for this training, and they benefit from the experience as it improves their posture and flexibility.

In many cases, when the teacher needs to facilitate yoga at another school, children who already know the Yoga Asanas come forward to teach the other children. This has clearly taught them to take responsibility to continue the education of their peers, while they develop self-confidence in implementing their learning to the class. The children are able to feel proud of themselves and capable, trusting in their own ability to teach. The Mother often spoke about the importance of yoga in physical, spiritual and mental development.

**The Responsibility of Cleanliness**

This year, some of the students are taking the initiative with teachers and friends in cleaning up their school areas. We help them out with providing snacks and some guidance when they require it. They are cutting away the thorny plants and creepers, and also cleaning up the garbage. Another thing they are doing is levelling the ground around and behind the schools. Wherever there is a pothole, they fill it with the soil so the rainwater doesn’t collect as a breeding ground for mosquitoes. This greatly reduces the mosquito issue. From all this, the children develop a real awareness of applying environmental education. TUES also among the few schools teaching about plastic awareness and plastic waste which is a growing problem in India.

The children are learning that when plastic collects in piles on the ground, it doesn’t let the water through to replenish the earth. Plastic also doesn’t biodegrade, so when it is thrown out, it stays there for many, many years. The children are being taught to reuse plastic, and if that’s not possible, how to dispose of it. We are teaching them, as a starting point, how to use and clean up their own waste. This teaches that change begins with the self. The children learn to empower themselves by taking land stewardship and pride in their immediate environment.

We also invite the Social Welfare people to teach the children and their parents about health and hygiene, and how to implement it in the home. They teach not only how to keep the home clean and healthy, but why it is so important for the whole family. The Social Welfare people are very happy to come in and help, and excited that they can teach the benefits to whole families. The children and their parents are very, very happy with this opportunity.
Outing Program for Afforestation

For this program, we selected children from each Evening School based on their interest in nature and afforestation, and took them to a place in Auroville called Aranya Sanctuary. Aranya is an example of a recovering portion of the Tropical Dry Evergreen Forest, the rare native environment. The person managing the forest project showed the children around, explaining to the children what kinds of trees and medicinal plants grew there. He also explained how some trees petrify, or turn into stone. The children also learned about canyons, and how when it rains, to control erosion. The children were very excited about their stay for two days. They all wrote about what they learned of nature, and the benefits of it, in the student newspaper.

Teachers’ Seminars and Training

Every first Sunday of month, we have a Teachers Seminar which is conducted by Prof. Veerasamy. He is well known in Children’s Education, and has even been awarded for his teaching excellence by the Government. He helps the teachers to think, expand their knowledge and develop their teaching methodology. True to his training, he teaches the teachers in a playful and joyful way, engaging their creativity and excitement. The teachers then implement their training in the Evening Schools. This makes the teachers, children and parents happy, showing the good results of the added training our teachers receive.

Requirement of Speaking English

Starting from last year, the children in the higher studies requested to the coordinator for more advanced English lessons during the summer holidays, so they could improve their English knowledge. This is because the Medium School students, who were up to this point only taught in Tamil, could not understand the English lessons in the Higher Studies, which are in English only.

In 2010, from April to June, we had English lessons provided to the children who were in need of it. Auroville volunteers and other teachers, who were English specialists, were brought in for this purpose. We are very happy to see the progress of the children’s standard. We got great support from the parents, and also with the government. The public school teachers also appreciate our special English Class program. We are also in the process of proposing to build a computer lab on the lands of Kottakari Farm, so the children can continue their English computer lessons. These will be available each evening, plus Saturday and Sunday for those who have to travel very far.

Society Awareness

This year we have started to do “litter free” clean up in the surrounding villages with their night school teachers and with the students, we make youngsters and elders realize that they should not use plastics and should not throw them out. We got good results, after doing it repeatedly every weekend. Lately many elders have joined with us to do the cleanup. So we are now organizing activities with the AV Cleanup group to join with them to coordinate and to make awareness of plastics and to teach them to segregate the waste.

Community Service

From time to time, when there is a need, parents sometimes ask if their children can receive some assistance with their homework and studying. Because we are there to provide a full learning atmosphere and improve the education of all children, we do what we can to provide help when there is a need.
LIFE EDUCATION CENTRE

Goal / Objective / Outcome:

The aim of the Life Education Centre (LEC) is to provide access to value-oriented education and vocational training for disadvantaged village teenage girls, and to improve their socio-economic conditions through capacity building and personal empowerment.

The Life Education Centre’s objectives are to:

- provide increased training opportunities for girls of 15+, appropriate to their specific needs, in order to gain a greater range of vocational skills and improve their income-generating capacity;

- Build capacities of students to be able to decide what they would like to do in their future, through core-quality empowerment sessions, discussions and counselling.

Programme/Activity details:

This specific project consists of a 2-year training programme for teenage girls, who have dropped out of school, giving them training in functional skills like English, vocational skills like tailoring, crochet, typing, and social awareness and human interactive skills using group discussions, personal counselling, diary writing, study tours, and culture-related open sessions. From last year we have started extending our activities to include also non full-time students as part of regular students - these include children with special needs as part-time students.

Outputs:

Physical outputs like building construction (toilet) was completed this year - the funding was made available by the GOI non plan grant; this was possible much before the monsoons and hence we are extremely happy and comfortable with a decent and functional toilet, for both staff and students in LEC after several years. To make the area more accessible (entrance of the school, the entrance of the toilet, plus add more fixtures inside the toilet, and modify the water supply system to the toilets and the soak pits), we had to do many minor repairs, which costed us extra money.

The cyclone Thane hit us quite severely but we managed to recuperate quite quickly and manage well. We lost a week of classes, besides a lot of green cover, and this summer will be extremely hot, but the place looks much brighter and clearer.

Outcome:

Regular Classes

- **Vocational skills.** Regular ongoing classes in tailoring and embroidery (224) for regular students. The 2 students who had passed their Lower level Typewriting exams last year, appeared for the Higher level exams this year and succeeded in them. This year we have 4 younger students who practise type-writing by themselves and we will see whether they wish to qualify themselves in it further after a year.

- **Functional skills.** One English class per week was given by the main English teacher (40)

- **Social skills and awareness.** Normally our classes of group discussions are organized by our coordinator focusing on meditation, role play and visualisation techniques; extra sessions along with the overseas students/teachers/interns were held on gender issues, anger, suicide, environmental degradation, arranged marriage, and problems associated with the dowry system. However since in this year we had 3 sets of Health care-giver training programmes, not much time could be offered for the group discussion classes; inspite of it, we did manage to have 4 such classes specifically and many informal discussions during lunch
hour with students.

- **Chanting classes.** We have now re-started our regular chanting classes, now led by Buvanasundari since October 2011 and we have completed 20 classes by the end of March - this means, every week we learn a new mantra and take the rest of the week to practise it thoroughly. Every morning the students start their work, with 45 mins of chanting the entire repertoire of the mantras taught to them (from October onwards), followed by a short meditation - some of mantras are in Tamil and some in Sanskrit and the meaning of every chant is explained to them. This is one of the most favoured sessions and classes for the girls.

**Core-quality empowerment (CQE) and Education Project.** The general concept of empowerment we are using is a practical one: to help the students empower themselves to use their biggest talent to create possibilities in life. This is done by becoming intensely aware of their own Core-Quality, finding proof for it in their past and present and to enable them to solve (some of) their actual problems. In the last 4 years, we saw the emergence of a new education project: this allows those girls who have identified what they need to do in their immediate future to realise the next step of their goals through either by completing their unfinished education, going for further additional education, or purchasing their own sewing machines. We encourage them by providing them time at LEC for self-study, taking assistance of teachers and tutoring if needed, convincing their parents and also counselling the girls.

- 5 girls who appeared through TNOU for their 2nd year exams and 2 have passed and will write the 3rd year in July/August; 2 of them failed in 1 subject each and one has failed in 2 subjects. All of them will complete their previous exams and will proceed to the 3rd year.
- 1 student who had written her 1st year of TNOU, is now going to study for the 2nd year; this girl is also studying Tamil typewriting and will present her Lower exams after a few months. She was one of the 2 girls who had completed the Higher level of English typewriting.

**Health focus of LEC**

Last year, we have indentified amongst ourselves that there is a growing need in society (India, villages, Auroville) for training, health care-givers (people who look after the sick, maybe at home, or maybe professionally outside the home) - so we decided to slowly change the focus of our education from LEC regular vocational hand-skills like tailoring, embroidery, crochet to health-care skills. However the beneficiaries of the 2 types of skills will be different groups, but any of the LEC regular tailoring students could also opt for joining the health training classes. But we have focused on conducting several short workshops on health for not only all our students, but also any member from other groups of the Auroville outreach.

**Pranayama workshop by JV**

We started last year with Pranayama training under JV and we try to practise this as much as possible in LEC as part of the daily practices; we wish to have refresher courses on this to check our practice techniques; new students learn from the senior students.

**A one day training program on CPR by ALERT**

This one-day CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation) course held in Tamil at LEC was attended by 21 women and 5 men from Auroville and the surrounding neighbourhood. This was a truly enriching experience - to have a preliminary 2 hour discussion about accidents and emergencies that we encounter in our daily lives and all the socio-psychological factors therein involved, through the sharing of our experiences. The teaching methodology was very simple and clear and the style was endearing, so that every person present was able to understand and benefit from the course.

The morning discussions set the background for the practical and technical aspects of the training on which we spent adequate instruction and practise time, during the rest of the day.
At the end of the day, each one of us felt an enormous sense of confidence and motivation that came through the capacity building in this short course.

A person who attended this workshop, was highly motivated and could persuade his son working and living in Chennai to become a full-time volunteer at ALERT Chennai.

Creating Awareness about Waste Management initiative
We had Guna from the above group lead a small lively discussion about the burning of waste and its impact on health and the environment. 17 people from Life Education Centre and Isaiambalam School attended this very interesting and useful session. While we did not insist on any signatures (for the petition against garbage burning in Pondy), all those present willingly supported the campaign, after knowing about the details. We were aware that village related garbage dumping issue is a bit different because of more open space availability in the villages due to which we don’t apparently see such concentrated toxic garbage dumps and hence, it needed a bit more of awareness creation as people don’t relate to the following:
- garbage collection or lack of it
- garbage separation or lack of it
- garbage dumping and burning thereby become remote issues

Some issues that came out from that morning (though not directly related to Pondy burning (but nevertheless relevant) were better waste management techniques in AV that also includes information about the effects of pollution from garbage on land, water, animals, humans (people are most interested TODAY in knowing about diseases); creating awareness and advocating practical measures for all the small private units in the Isaiambalam area (who are currently burning waste); having campaigns with older school children in different areas.

Somatics and Feldenkrias special workshops by Susmita
2 such workshops were held - one for the LEC students and the other for Aurovilians - this was a set of movements and relaxation exercises to allow the body to find its natural movements and rhythm through a series of very gentle movements and exercises that could be performed by all people to help let go of stress and pain in the muscles.

These workshops are in addition to the weekly Somatics classes of Susmita for regular LEC students (20 sessions)

Miming Workshops by Drupad
This was a series of 3 wonderful sessions, of joy, laughter and fun in trying to express ourselves through the language of mime - the group was small - only 10 people, but this helped us express ourselves freely, without inhibitions and gave each one of us the possibility for self-expression; for many of us who are pre-occupied with multiple issues, this was one opportunity to be there in full body, mind and spirit and enjoy the present and each other’s antics.

Eye care check-up at the Aravind Eye Hospital
We took all the students and some of our staff to the Eye Hospital for the regular eye check-up - old students (the recently graduated ones), also came for this check-up. Only one amongst the new students, needed to wear spectacles, while the vision of the rest was either normal or under control.

Healing Touch Workshop
A 2 day Healing Touch Workshop (level 1 Certificate Program), by the Healing Touch International was held at LEC (organised by Mohanam Cultural Centre) with the participation from some regular LEC students (4), LEC Health care students (4), plus students (7) connected to the Mohanam Cultural Centre.

Workshop on Chakras
A half-day workshop on Chakras and their functions in the body was given by Buvansundari for
the LEC students - this class opened up a new realm of knowledge for the students, who were fascinated by the pictures of energy fields that was used as teaching materials; they were taught the relationship of chakras with the organs, senses, colours, feelings /emotions and a meditative technique was taught to them for the Mooladhara chakra, which they practice from time to time in the morning meditation and chanting time.

Basics of Psychiatry
A talk on 2 days (one in Tamil for all LEC students (regular students and health-care students), and one in English for Aurovilians) by Dr Anand, from Indira Gandhi Medical College and Hospital was held in LEC in March - Dr Anand was able to explain in a very clear and simple manner, a very complex medical subject that could be understood by each and every village student. His methodology during the talk was interactive and provoked and encouraged students to ask questions and clarify doubts without any inhibitions.

3 month Health Caregiver training programmes at Life Education Centre
The 3 month Health Caregiver trainings were the main highlights of LEC this year; held during the period July-Sept 2011 and Dec-March 2012, with 18 graduates from Auroville and the local region (17 women and 1 man) - each 3 month programme had a total of 100 class-room teaching hours with practicals spread over 28 classes over these 3 months, the main trainer was Ulrike (Urvasi) with Guest Teachers (Suryagandhi from Dental Centre, Sumathi and Dr Lucas from EcoPro, Parvathi from Pitchandikulam, Susmita from Accessible Auroville, Dr Shano from Auroville Health Centre and Dr Anand from Pondicherry). Site visits had also been organised for these students. The second batch of students did an apprentice segment of the training at the Ashram’s CARE (abode for senior members of the Ashram). Also for the first time, we were able to translate into Tamil, some of the English documents (8), to be supplied as notes for the students.

This training program has covered the following specific areas: Anatomy, physiology, pathology (leading to a thorough understanding of common diseases and their prevention), nutrition and special dietary needs, movement & mobility, hygiene, first aid, a basic and practical knowledge of alternative medicine, communication & interpersonal as well as simple nursing skills such as measuring blood pressure, pulse, dressing of wounds, use of bed-pans, etc. using instructive, didactic, practical sessions, with home-exercises, simple notes, and teaching materials like posters, books, ppt and simple nursing equipment. The programme aimed to bring self-awareness and knowledge about the caregiver’s own health and body, that allows them to become sensitive to not only their own health needs, but that of the person whom they care for, either as a family member or as a professional bedside caregiver.

• Special classes, events, visits and workshops
• Participation in AV Film Festival. Last year in Feb 2011, there was a 2 week film workshop conducted by Sasi Somu in LEC in Feb 2011 - this was attended by 6 students; 1 staff actually participated; All the short movies that were produced were screened in the AV film festival held in August/September. The girls selected the theme, story and wrote script and screen play for their one-shot movies and a collective movie. 1 of these films (Suseela - A True Story) won the Best camera award in the category of Workshop films made by residents of the Auroville Bioregion for a good understanding of characterization and its depiction and setting the mood for a character study. All the students of LEC had attended the screening of their films during the festival. The award recipient Kalai was overjoyed and couldn’t believe it! This entire exercise helped to boost the self-confidence of a young woman from the village.

Visit to the Sri Aurobindo Ashram. We had a series of 3 special classes on the life and Yoga of the Mother and Sri Aurobindo between the period November - January and at the end of this series, we went to visit the samadhi at Ashram in Pondy on the occasion of the Golden Day on 29th Feb (the Day of the Supramental Manifestation in the earth’s atmosphere); however there we had the wonderful surprise of being ushered into the Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s Room!
OUTREACH SCHOOLS

Visit to Children’s Book Fair organised by Ilaignarkal School and to the event organised by Arul Vazhi school in Bharat Nivas held to commemorate the anniversary of the Mother’s first meeting with Sri Aurobindo (29th March)

Daily nutritious snacks. Provision of daily snacks continued throughout the period. We have supplemented their nutrition with eggs and curd starting once a week each. From the next year onwards we will try to provide a very simple lunch for all the students as we notice that the quantity of lunch that they bring from home is insufficient when some girls (the younger ones) eat more than what they bring from the lunch of the other students.

- Enrolments, graduations and dropouts:

- Regular LEC activities
  - Existing students in end March 2011: 10 full time
  - New enrolments: 8 students (3 months or more duration)
  - Drop-out of students: 8 students (1 due to family problems in village; 1 got into higher education; 4 got jobs; 1 discontinued due to mother having hip surgery; 1 student wishes to complete her exams).
  - Existing students in end March 2012: 10 full time

Tailoring students only
8 short term tailoring students for 2 months from Wellpaper

Health caregiver students
17 health care-giver trainees each of whom stayed with us for 3 months

1. To what extent did these activities contribute to the realisation of the objectives? What has been the impact of the activities undertaken?

In LEC, we have finished a 20-year cycle of trying of different ways of intervention for social change. Now comes the next phase when we are piloting other new experiments and seeing upto where they will go. The beauty of Auroville is that it allows for experimentation, and no effort goes wasted - it is an enormous learning experience at every stage. The beauty of growth is also that, we (the core-team) are willing to face whatever the reality and universe will bring to us in the next year. Zerina has remained the coordinator since 1994, for 18 years and is assisted by Indirani who has been with us for more than 10 years and has become an Aurovillian recently; Harini has been an executive along with Marijke.

Last year, we have identified amongst ourselves that there is a growing need in society (India, villages, Auroville) for training, health care-givers (people who look after the sick, maybe at home, or maybe professionally outside the home) - so we decided to slowly change the focus of our education from artistic hand-skills like tailoring, embroidery, crochet to health-care skills. Consequently we concentrated this year on 3 month training programmes in this field (one 1-month programmes, and 2 sets of 3-month programmes) for Tamil speaking people from the villages and/or Auroville, as well as English speaking people from Auroville or elsewhere. Besides, many short term health related workshops have been organised by LEC this year - so that all current students, old students, interested Tamil women can attend.

Simultaneously, we carried on the tailoring training, so that the few girls who need this skill, will get their benefits from it. We have 4 young girls of the ages of 14-18 (who do not wish to go for further education), who joined us in the last one year - - they are girls who have dropped out of their regular education in other outreach schools of AV. Besides them we have 3 new married women as tailoring students, we have 3 senior girls who teach the new ones and 1 more regular student. We have had more part-time tailoring students who come for short periods of 2-3 months.
2. **Difficulties**

- We have been working since 20 years now and in the last 3-4 years, the supplementary education that we offer for school drop outs is not really much needed in this area - villagers want to take up regular full-time education and hence girls today are studying further in the normal education (and take loans to study higher) and hence we have fewer and fewer drop-outs - which by itself, is great - so the students that we have more or less represent the last generations of real drop-outs.

- This is the reason why we have many new students who come during the first few months of the academic year (April, just after they have completed their school exams) and they come to LEC for 3-4 months either till their results are declared and / or they have obtained admission into a college. While this interrupts our yearly plan, we have decided not to let this trend bother us, and for all long or short as the student is there, she will get the maximum advantage of being part of a life educational centre - of being students of a variety of classes (not just tailoring) with quality teachers from Auroville, that tries to awaken the consciousness and in also taking up responsibilities of doing tasks of maintaining the place (kitchen, toilet, classrooms, library) all by themselves.

- Hence because of this trend fund raising from external donors had not been our major priority in the last 2 years, besides that for the routine running expenses of LEC. Besides, for the main people in charge (Zerina and Harini) vital energies to run this place was on the ‘wanting’ side, after 18-20 years of the same work. Also part of the reason is that funding is always an issue for such small centres of research whose main mission is the intangible ‘consciousness-changing’ task. That takes generations!!!! The focus of the school is small (numbers) but the efforts to put in have been enormous.

- In January this year we had hoped that another team would come and take over LEC, but somehow in the last 2 months we realised that this is not going to be that way - so we are continuing LEC with essentially the same set of people - except that Zerina will not be with us full time - Indirani will be taking over Zerina's daily administrative role, with Harini, looking overall over it and being a regular teacher; but Zerina has promised to be with us on a need basis for counselling, group discussions, etc, according to her availability.

- Also, what we will try to inculcate is the presence of senior and professional Aurovilians as part-time, but regular teachers. Some of those who have committed themselves are Shankar (from Aikiyam - value systems of India through mythology), Suriyagandhi (from AV Dental Centre - on health and hygiene), Krupa (art therapist and CPS member), Parvathi (from Pitchandikulam - use of medicinal plants), besides Meenakshi (Ilaignarkal) and Selvi (Deepam).

- What changes is that the existing wide range of activities will be reduced to fit into our very tight budget for this year 2012-13 (about the next year, we don’t have a clue!), but we are hopeful that other activities of Auroville can be done here at LEC, so that there is better resource utilisation of space and capacities. A direct outcome of this decision is that Child Protection Services will use a small corner of our school to manage its activities.

- For the first time after 21 years, we will have to ask for a small contribution from every student - we do not like doing this, but we need to look at this, to at least cover even a tiny portion of our expenses - this contribution requested will be a small token of Rs 100 per student per month. It will not become a criterion for the girl to attend the Centre, if this is not possible. Also up to now, all our short day trips and study tours have been funded completely by us (there are not many but a few during the year), and this may not be possible in the future and hence we might ask for a small token contribution from each student attending the trip. It will be to meet a small portion of the trip expenses. Here too we don’t want to force the student to pay if she is not able to.

- **Visits to students’ families.** No house visits this year because most of the Coordinator’s time was spent on the Health Caregiver training programme; however old students visited at LEC for various occasions.
OUTREACH SCHOOLS

- This is a community education centre - this means we expect the students themselves to take everyday charge of the campus - basic work of preparing the snacks, cleaning the toilets, class-rooms, buying the provisions, etc; this is not easy as the students who come are not used to doing this, but need to learn about it and while this takes a good time of the working hours, we feel we should not depend on paid staff for this basic work; the more difficult tasks of garden maintenance is done with hired help.

Future plans:
  o Offer LEC facilities for more health related well-being workshops and trainings for the local people (eg: somatics, pranayama, pelvic floor exercises).
  o The regular daily skill training in tailoring; regular daily and weekly classes of English, chanting, story-telling, monthly group discussions and counselling will continue, besides special classes on Mother and Sri Aurobindo’s yoga and on the work of ancient seers of Tamil Nadu.
  o The possibility of LEC to remain as a counselling centre for women will always be available.
  o This year, we will also have a couple of very extensive, interesting and extremely useful workshops on the ‘adverse effects of alcoholism’; and the target audience will be village women who are the silent-sufferers in the homes of alcohol-dependent members.

2011-2012

Part-time tailoring students

Health care-giver training - classes
Talk on basic psychiatric disorders by Dr Anand, Pondicherry

Class by Parvathi, Pitchandikulam on the use of local herbs and plants for good health

Practical sessions on the movement and transfer of wheelchair-dependent patients
CENTRE FOR EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

PROJECTS
AUROVILLE RAINBOW CHILD PROGRAM

Objective:

The aim of the project is to offer to Auroville children opportunities to discover themselves as an energy body and acquire new skills in addition to their formal school education.

Outputs:

“Rainbow Child Program” weekly class schedule

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day &amp; Time</th>
<th>Class Name &amp; Duration</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Instructor &amp; helper</th>
<th>No. of participants</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 10am</td>
<td>Yoga for children 1h</td>
<td>Pitanga</td>
<td>Gala</td>
<td>12-15</td>
<td>5-13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saturday 11am</td>
<td>Energetic Games 1h</td>
<td>Pitanga</td>
<td>Gala</td>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>5-13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Around 23 children from different schools participate regularly, aged from 4.5 to 13.

Outcomes:

During the last year an influx of new kids in all age groups was noticed. They needed to start from the basics in energy work. Sometimes the more experienced children acted as teachers or teacher’s helpers. This development was interesting to witness and brought fun to the whole group.

In Yoga classes, the new kids grasped information quickly and were able to follow techniques and absorb sometimes complex knowledge effortlessly, regardless of age. It was observed that yoga was naturally very simple and understandable for kids even as young as 5. This year we concentrated more on Pranayama, exploring especially dynamic forms and styles. Through enjoyable competitions and games, control of breath and flexibility of the mind were discovered.
**PROJECTS**

In the Energy Game classes, children were able to choose their preferred activity. They showed more interest in crafts, theatrical activities and games. A lot of effort was put forth to share information and let the kids explore the flow of life energy.

For example, a fun activity was fruit and vegetable carving. This was enriched with information about food value and the ecological aspects of food. Discussions and sharing on food ethics were encouraged. This approach will be developed further.

For three months, Pitanga team allowed access to a second room. The groups were made smaller for deeper work. By rotation, children studied the properties of crystals and their influence on the human body in a quiet and focused atmosphere.

**Process / Timelines:**

The classes started in April 2007. The program is ongoing.

**Remarks:**

The program will continue to implement changes and adjustments according to children's needs and interests.

After many years working at different locations, there is a strong wish to have a permanent and "child friendly" place. If such a space becomes available, more activities will be offered, even on a daily basis.
ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS AT TRANSITION SCHOOL

Goal / Objective:

The main goal of this work is to continue to support and further develop environmental awareness, education, responsibility, action and conservation amongst the students and the teachers. Throughout the school year teachers and students of all the different groups at Transition School (grades 1-8) worked on research projects and activities with the aim of providing opportunities for the children to acquire the knowledge, values, attitudes, commitment and skills needed to learn about, protect and improve the environment.

Teachers and students of the various classes worked on various projects that stressed the development and application of skills while learning about the universe, its natural resources and real world environmental topics.

Auroville and its bioregion offer so many opportunities to learn. So much research and work are being done in Auroville: technologies for low energy housing, water harvesting, renewable energy, forest planting, organic farming, waste water recycling and transportation, just to name a few things. Additionally, this year Auroville and the surrounding area experienced a strong cyclone that greatly affected many of the trees. The students were affected by this and were able to observe and assess the damage, help clean, and at present watch as the forest tries to revive.

Today's young people are aware of and concerned about environmental issues. They are eager to learn more and take action, but some of the information they receive makes them feel fearful and powerless. We would like to develop these studies in a way that we can all learn about our beautiful universe and experience that we can help make meaningful changes that can lead to a healthier environment.

Program/Activity details:

Environmental studies are an important part of our program. An interdisciplinary approach: an approach that encourages the children to learn about the environment from a variety of perspectives. Geography, Ecology, Chemistry, Biology as well as History and Current Events stress the interconnectedness of life on Earth. Some of the projects that the various groups participated in this year include:

- Children participated in clean-ups in the school and surrounding areas.
- Study of world geography and Biomes
- Project on birds and trip to bird sanctuary
- DVD series. One particularly inspiring series is “Planet Earth” with David Attenborough. Here we were able to see and learn about the different biomes of our planet and the results of interaction with humankind and development. After viewing these, time was given for discussion and reflection.
- Study and experiments in science classes that demonstrate things like acid rain, greenhouse gasses, the effects of oil spills, global warming and other commonly studied phenomena.
- The grade 7 class worked to learn about rain water run-off on the school campus, and gave some advice to alleviate some of the difficulties.
- Students of different groups visited many places within Auroville and outside of Auroville and learned about the environmental issues that were being worked on. Here are just a few of the many outings:
  - Pitchandikulum Forest, Sadhaka Forest, Botanical Gardens and other gardens and orchards in Auroville
  - CSR Auroville—wastewater treatment, biogas, alternative building technology
  - Wind generator technology in Auroville
PROJECTS

- Trip to Irumbai and other areas of our bioregion
- Trip to Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary
- Trip to Neyveli Lignite Corporation

A highlight of the 8th grade science class was a day visit to the Neyveli Lignite Corporation in the planned township of Neyveli about 2 1/2 hours south of Auroville. Neyveli Lignite Corporation Ltd. (NLC) is India's largest lignite mining company, and is also one of the country's leading power generation companies. The students were taken on a guided tour to fully operational open cast Mine - Mine I A, as well as a functioning Thermal Power Station. The company operates three open cast mines in Neyveli, producing some 24 million tons of high-grade lignite per year. Most of the lignite is consumed by NLC's two thermal power generation plants, which account for a total power capacity of over 2,000 megawatts.

The students got to observe and experience how science and technology applies to the 'real life' and how things operate on the field. They also got to appreciate the massive-scale production in such a facility, and see heavy machinery and contraptions such as earth diggers, conveyor belts, explosive units, and the safety facilities that go with their use. The students also visited an afforestation plant where old mines have been reconverted to a lake and forest area, highlighting the importance of environmental and social responsibility in corporations. Another valuable experience was that students could interact with over a dozen professionals ranging from geologists, engineers, and scientists. They also experienced first-hand the concept of 'Indian hospitality' in the way we were received and taken care of. It was a very positive experience for both the students as well as the teachers.

- Visit to the Pichavaram Mangrove forest: The visit to Neyveli was followed by a detour to the Pichavaram Mangrove forest, the second largest mangrove forest of India after the Sunderbans, covering an area of over 2500 acres. Hiring non-motorized row boats to navigate through the ecosystem, the students experienced both the faunal and floral biodiversity of the area. Of particular interest were the unique trees and plants adapted to the estuarine ecosystem with its brackish waters. The two main plant geneses included the Rhizophora and Avicenna, with their aerial and prop roots for breathing and support. The faunal diversity included crabs and molluscs of the mud flats, as well as water birds. This visit highlighted the importance of protection and conservation of the environment and natural ecosystems, as well as responsible and sustainable tourism.

Another special project that the school was involved in:
Garbology: Transition, along with two other schools in Auroville (Udavi and Deepanam) participated in the process of creating a curriculum for waste. This is a project to create a waste curriculum that can be used in schools throughout India. The purpose of it is to increase awareness about waste.

- A group of teachers and students met with the project holders to share ideas on how to make the project accessible to all, educational and fun.
- The team came up with 101 activities around the different aspects of waste. Some of the activities were then tested in the different schools.
- The curriculum is divided into different themes, and the activities include games, science experiments and surveys. The curriculum is for students from grade 1 to grade 8.
- The students responded very enthusiastically to the different activities offered.

Students were encouraged to investigate topics of their interest through

- Internet or book research
- Field trips to observe examples of the topic being studied
- Experts in the field who may volunteer their time to share knowledge with the children
- Documentaries
- Interviews

Students are expected to demonstrate what they have learned and to share their knowledge and observations with other students through discussion, presentations, posters, power point presentations or other ways that they may develop.

There should be a continuous assessment and evaluation. Students’ output as well as their attitude, participation and cooperation will be assessed by the teacher, fellow students and by themselves.

**Outputs:**

Students demonstrated what they had learned and shared their observations and feelings through:

- Presentations
- Discussions
- Power point presentations
- Open Houses and Exhibitions
- Personal narrative writing
- Personal journals
- Study of rainwater run-off
- Photographs of the Transition School campus during heavy rains
- Photographs of other aspects of nature in AV after the cyclone

**Outcome:**

- Through teacher and student discussions and assessment, we concluded that this emphasis on Environmental Awareness had awakened more awareness in our environment and exposed the students to the positive actions that are being taken that can help us all make our planet a healthier and safer place to live. Children spoke about what they could do and participated in activities in and outside of school. Of course this needs to be constantly worked on and we plan to continue this. Additionally we observed evidence that led us to believe that this work:
  - Stimulated a sense of wonder (beauty, questions...)
  - Stimulated a sense of responsibility
  - Helped the children develop research, thinking and learning skills
  - Gave the opportunity for children to learn more about things that they were particularly interested in.
  - Gave the opportunity for children to learn to assess.
  - Gave the opportunity for children to share their work through presentations or informal discussions.
  - Gave the children the chance to practice cooperative learning skills.

Children of all ages were enthusiastic and sincere in their work and made plans to continue the project in the next school year. We are working to plan a project in which Transition School could work with an Auroville unit to recycle waste paper and make some of the school notebooks.

**Progress Timelines:**

This is an ongoing project and we would like to continue it in the next school year.
PROJECTS

FURTHER DEVELOPMENT OF INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING WITHIN SCHOOL
Observing and developing the complementary processes of individual and group work

Aim of Project: For the past two years Transition School teachers have been working on individualized personal learning techniques in the classroom to complement the project and class work.

Our classrooms, from grades 1-8, are diverse; there is a wide range of interests, a variety of learning styles and levels of readiness. Additionally, our students and the teachers that work with them represent about 20 different countries, several states of India and a variety of cultures. This multi-cultural environment is challenging and offers stimulating opportunities for dynamic, creative teaching and learning experiences. It also exposes teachers and children to humanity’s rich cultural heritage and diversity.

As a result of our observations and studies, it was decided that teachers would make changes in their classrooms that would include more opportunities for the children to organize their own work and have more choice in the activities, keeping in mind that there are times when it is important for the class to work together: to introduce concepts, to discuss, to question and to do group work. Awareness through the Body, Music, theater, arts and crafts and other learning projects also give the students opportunities to further develop their skills, strengths and interests (as well as try to overcome any difficulties that they might be facing) in a collective atmosphere. It important that these individuals learn to appreciate each other, to work together, to cooperate and be together as a first step towards a collective that aims for human unity.

Program/Activity details:

This year the school continued to work on personalized learning activities that encourage each child to progress freely. Two important aspects of individualized learning in the classroom are the work plan and tutoring possibilities.

The work plan:

Once a week the children receive a work plan. New topics are introduced by the teacher, and then students are free to choose which assignment they work on during class time. This encourages students to be self disciplined and they begin to learn how to use their time efficiently.

The students also become responsible themselves to finish and hand in their work on time. It is up to them to look in their work plan and find what they have finished and what still needs to be done. This allows students to work at their own pace, including taking short breaks from work if they need it. When a student finishes all the work on their work plan before the end of the week s/he can choose from a variety of enrichment activities drawing from various disciplines.

Tutoring

Students with difficulties in certain areas have the opportunity to work with tutors, either individually or in small groups. This gives them the time to review work they have done in class, and ask questions that they may not ask when they are with the larger group. The tutor is able to ensure that students have fully understood the subject matter.

At the same time we recognize the importance of children working together, learning to collaborate and work together. Group work enables students to share their thinking, brainstorm ideas, learn to consolidate, evaluate and edit the contributions of group members, and take pride in their work as individuals and as members of a team. Class projects were designed so that the children had specific work to do as a member of a team. Children participated in a wide variety of class projects.
Outputs:

Personalized learning gave many opportunities for children to learn independently and together. Here are some of the activities that we were able to provide:

A few examples of projects:

- **Haiku and PowerPoint presentation in which each child was able to take a photograph of some aspect of nature, write a Haiku about this and then together they make a PowerPoint presentation.**
- **Science project: Small play reflecting the children’s understanding of the water cycle.**
- **Music: To facilitate this, yearly, the music teachers include in the program a project entitled “Own Choice”. Here students are asked to share with the class their own taste in music. They are required to research and present a piece that they enjoy listening to, and to give reasons why they wanted to share it. They are given total freedom in terms of genre and style as long as it is something that they have chosen themselves.**
- **Heroes project: Children chose individual heroes to learn and write about and then made a group presentation to parents.**
- **Awareness through the Body: Awareness through the Body is individualized learning. In our work we aim to provide a wide variety of situations and activities where each child can explore and discover her/himself. The exercises are proposed to the whole group and every individual is working in the same activity with the same directions, but because the exercises are only tools for self-discovery and self-mastery and not the aim itself, each child will be working in his/her individual unique experience. It is the way the teacher leads the exercises what make ATB activities individualized learning. The teachers focus on empowering the child’s self-sensing faculty; helping the child to acquire confidence and trust on her/his own perceptions, attentively assisting each individual to recognize what the exercise is bringing up for him to work on, and coaching the individual to stay committed to his own process.**
- **Choose to do activities which are related to a class project. For example: if the class is doing a project on a certain culture a student might create maps and timelines for each cultural/historical period, or do research on some aspect of the culture.**
  - Power point presentations presented by students.
  - Write and perform songs
  - Theatre-children choose their roles and extra participation
  - Science - models, posters and power point presentations
  - Writing and illustrating books
  - Technology, Internet Research (PowerPoint Presentations, etc.)

Outcome:

Personalized learning focuses on key concepts and skills as well as the development of self-discipline, organization skills and offers many opportunities for self-knowledge. As children progress, concepts and skills become increasingly more complex, so the structure and methods vary. Class discussions and group work help to reinforce the skills and concepts and at the same time give the children the chance to work together; to learn from each other and appreciate each individual’s input and to learn teamwork skills that will be helpful for them all through their lives.

We saw an increased enthusiasm in the classes. The children were happy to have the freedom of choice in their schedules. Many teachers reported that the students were more motivated and that they are learning to use their time more productively.

Progress Timelines:

This was an ongoing process with regular assessment throughout the school year.
PROJECTS

WHITE PEACOCK

A ceramic art studio for children and adults

Objective / Outcome:

- To create a space for exploration of creativity through clay work
- To build and maintain a community spirit between a group of people randomly gathered by their passion for creative arts and crafts
- To build more confidence and a sense of peace through self-realization
- To encourage children and adults to develop their artistic skills to allow the artist within to emerge
- To provide an opportunity for learning after school/work time and weekends
- To help young children develop and improve their fine motor skills

Outputs:

- Six clay sessions weekly 2-3 hours each
- Class preparation, research on materials, firing (weekly - 8 hours)
- ‘Clay Masala’ Exhibition (in Pitanga, November 2011), master-classes, individual classes

An average of 40-50 children and adults upto the age of 70 - mostly Aurovillians and Newcomers - participated in these classes regularly.

Two part-time instructors - project holders (minimum 20 hours per week each), one administrative and research support plus one helper (volunteer) worked on our project throughout the year.
Outcomes:

Clay work gives an opportunity for students to freely express something deep within themselves and to come in contact with their inner self.

Working with clay demands a lot of concentration and patience along with the ability to visualize. Children demonstrated increasing levels of skills (fine motor and artistic skills). All of the participants (including trainers) enjoyed the special atmosphere (i.e. relaxed, camaraderie, supportive, and harmonious) which nourished their creative capacities.

Sunday classes became extremely popular among families with young children. The youngest clay artist was just 3 years old.

After three years of intense work we realized that it’s time now to show our results to the public. Along with artifacts we tried to present the special White Peacock’s atmosphere.

We called our first exhibition 'Clay Masala' trying to put all different styles and approaches of young and adult club members together in one fusion.

Surprisingly the exhibition of non-professional works got a lot of positive attention and was appreciated for its joyful energy. It became an enriching experience for all the participants. 'Magzav' featured an article on this event.

Here are some comments by students of different ages who shared their feeling of being with clay:

'I enjoy the clay class because I can make things with clay. I can design it with tools, I can shape it whatever way I want it, and I can paint.' Daniel, 11 years

'White Peacock studio is a place where children's dreams become true. I enjoy the creative and harmonious atmosphere, it brings light, playfulness and fantasy in everyday life.' Evgenia, 34 years

'When I hold clay I feel the heart beat.' Masha, 13 years

'I like working with clay because I can explore it and there are many different ways of using it or playing with it. And clay can be fixed in any shape I put it in.' Hye Yoon, 12 years
PROJECTS

Process / Timelines:

This project started in the month of March 2008 and is ongoing.

Remarks:

The cyclone brought some damage to our tiled roof, but it brought even more togetherness to the team - all the participants came together to clean the compound. The roof was also fixed with the great help of Auroville Housing Group.

Recent change in electricity supply affected our firing schedule. Due to constant power cuts both of our kilns went out of order. We hope that this situation will improve so we can continue our creative research.
MOBILE EXHIBITION ON WILDLIFE CONSERVATION

Aim:

Very little is known of Auroville’s Wildlife and this program aims to bring greater information and understanding to the youth in Auroville and the surrounding villages.

This would also encourage children to protect their natural resources and see how all is connected in Nature.

The older students of Deepanam School were given this project of collecting data & creating an awareness campaign about the local wildlife. This was their mission!

Program/Activity details:

The older students were given the task of sharing their data with the younger students in Deepanam by making posters & setting up aquariums & terrariums through which others could see various forms of wildlife. In addition posters were made.

For this several educational trips to various environmental centers & field trips were made to show the different issues related to their project. To make this very inspiring the students had to visit and meet those involved in such programs.

Outputs:

For the first part we were able to achieve:

- Data collection accompanied by study & planning
- Ecological tours to places like Adyar Poonga in Chennai which is a Botanical Park created by Pitchandikulam Green Works Team and to Pitchavaram to study the Mangroves etc.
- Creation of photos and posters that can be a visual guide
We hope to continue this program next year. We wish that these sort of students’ organised initiatives and projects can be encouraged regularly for other students to get inspired by! These are the definite steps towards an integral education. As we further our efforts in this direction we are able to provide the students such opportunities by which they learn to:

- Exercise self-discipline & self-motivation
- Understand team spirit & respect for others
- Express & communicate with others
- Develop aesthetic values
LIFE SCIENCE LABORATORY

Goal:
The aim of this Life Science Laboratory is to provide a place for students to come to learn and bring awareness about their local eco-system to others around them. This is a laboratory where all students and children are welcome to learn and see the activities on the wildlife of Auroville area.

Life Science Laboratory is an essential part of Deepanam School as it furthers the ideal of Integral Education. By providing the students an opportunity to learn and explore Nature in its totality. We encourage children to observe their natural surroundings and with this learn about the science of life.

Program/Activity details:
We maintain in the Life Science Laboratory a collection of:
1. Aquariums for indigenous fish-breeding and exotic ones too.
3. Some live rodents & amphibians for children to interact and play with (specially for the younger children there is a need to touch and befriend animals to remove fear and misunderstandings about animals.
4. We have a nursery for injured or lost baby animals (squirrels, birds, reptiles...) that are brought here by students and need care and help.

All these activities help to awaken in children a love for Nature. The older students take up active responsibilities like maintaining aquariums and terrariums and through this learn lessons directly in biology and zoology. The observation of processes related to breeding of fish, insects & amphibians becomes a learning experiment - a true scientific education.
Outputs:

- 8 Fresh water Aquariums
- 4 Sea Water Aquariums
- 4 Terrariums
- An amphibian & insect pit of 3 m deep to study their life cycle
- An enclosed garden & pond for geese and ducks
- Life Science library books & other equipment for study & research of wildlife
- Life Science Laboratory itself

Through this program almost all the students in Deepanam School (all 7 grades) were encouraged to participate by having regular weekly project hours. The smaller (1st & 2nd grades) students were exposed to particular, shorter projects. For example they were each explained briefly about the sea-aquariums and then encouraged to make their own diary / report on all that they learnt with their own drawings, etc. This helped them understand life science in a very practical & real way.

Older students took up more serious tasks and research. Projects like ocean life around us & invertebrates found on the beaches was one project that was widely enjoyed. As it involved going to the beaches and doing practical surveys and collections, it brought great enthusiasm even though it meant being out in full sun for hours collecting data and specimens.

These projects brought in a wonderful team spirit amongst the students and they were able to participate very harmoniously towards this. Skills like cooperation, endurance, observation and patience were key qualities that were developed.

Besides the Deepanam students, other children from the Auroville kindergartens and outreach school students visited the Life Science Laboratory too.
**Goal of the Project:**

To provide children with the means where they have all the possibilities to explore their creativity for the joy of learning in a free choice environment where the adults could help them discover within themselves greater horizons of knowledge and perfection!

Also for the younger ones it gives them the platform to discover their faculties and the joy of knowing themselves each day with new creative energy.

**Program/Activity details:**

Our older students, about 45 in number, were given freedom to choose from various crafts classes: pottery, origami, carpentry, painting, beads-works, and nature crafts.

Each child chose those activities that interested him/her and with the respective teacher committed to work for a fixed amount of time.

In this way children were made to be responsible for their choices and at the same time given the freedom to select their own activities.

Where the younger ones were having fixed timings to go through some of these activities in order to learn to put their full concentration and try their hands on perfection - the older students were slowly encouraged to make their own schedule in the afternoons - 1.15 pm to 3.15 pm to focus longer during the week over an activity they would like to explore in-depth.

**Input:**

Funds received were used mainly to purchase the raw materials used for various activities for carpentry and crafts workshops.

Also various inputs from skilled people helped make the workshops more successful.
PROJECTS

Outputs:
As we were able to work in mixed age group the students were able to come up with their own creative activities and inspire the younger ones with love and care. Their growing confidence in themselves made them very concentrated and they began to work on their own.

Self-exploration and the joy of creating on their own were greatly appreciated by them.

Outcomes:
At the end of the project there was an exhibition wherein they invited their parents and the community to display their works.

Our various workshops increased the overall sense of creative unity in the children and also the urge of learning everything and everywhere. They learnt new skills with a sense of goodwill and for the joy of progressing. We also noticed it enforced them to be cooperative with each other and brought about harmony in their workings relationships as well.

We had about 55 students and 8 teachers/helpers who were involved in this.

Progress Timelines:
Overall it was over six months that the children worked in projects they had selected and concluded with the exhibition. We strongly believe in this way of working where from a young age students are encouraged to take responsibilities and also cultivate in themselves the seeds of perfection and develop their aesthetic values organically.
Aim of the Project:

The aim of the project is to develop a complete education system in the spirit and ideals (nothing can be taught, from near to far, from known to unknown) of The Mother and Sri Aurobindo. The project intends to work in collaboration with classroom teachers to fulfill the needs of students in Auroville Schools and to an extent the students from outreach schools in Auroville and neighboring villages.

Objectives:

Science Exhibition

Conducting exhibition with the help of students and science teachers and inviting other school children to participate.

Students’ museum

Display the collected materials by the students during the field trips, students’ creative works and specimens.

Overview and purpose of project:

- To make children feel that science is all around us and we can gain knowledge as well as solve many problems also by relating the learning process to the physical and social environment.
- To provide a forum for children to pursue their natural curiosity and inventiveness to quench their thirst for creativity.
- To apply mathematics to visualize and solve problems pertaining to everyday life.
PROJECTS

Partners in the Project Include:

- Auroville Schools Science Educational Training Centre Team & students
- Aikiyam School, Auroville
- Udavi Gentillesse School, Auroville
- Govt. High School, Alankuppam
- Kuilapalayam Trust School
- Tamil Ulagam Evening School - Rayapudpakkam
- White Angels School - Puducherry
- Bharathidasan English High School - Puducherry
- Vijayanjali Primary School - Alankuppam
- Pavendar English High School - Alankuppam
- Govt. Primary School - Sanjeevi Nagar
-Govt. Primary School - Edyanchavady

Exhibits:

The exhibit encompasses three main topics that integrate display/learning modules. The learning modules will be designed for portability to the formal education curriculum. The following outline is provided to summarize the content of the exhibit.

- Science Yesterday and Today
- How Stuff Works?
- Science and Technology in Textiles
### Output:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Product/Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Science and technology in Textiles</td>
<td>Chain activity with the processes involved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fibre to fabric</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How stuff works?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar cooker</td>
<td>models</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cell phone charger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mini aeroplane</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power from Salt water</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match the weight</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students’ Museum</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Field trip</td>
<td>Collected Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recycle, Reduce and Reuse</td>
<td>Hands on live workshop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Outcome:

**Schools Participation:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools Name</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Teacher/Public</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arulvazhi Education Centre</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Future School</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt Primary School, Edyanchavady</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transition School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AV Industrial School</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aikiyam School</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pudhu Ulagam Evening School</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Ulagam Evening School</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Udavi School</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eco Club - Indira Nagar</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trust School Kuilapalayam</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Angels school - Pondicherry</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. High School - Alankuppam</td>
<td>375</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vijayangali Primary School Alainkuppam</td>
<td>550</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pavendar English High School - Alankuppam</td>
<td>275</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt. School -Moratandy</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher trainees - Vanur block</td>
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<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pauls Teacher training school</td>
<td>24</td>
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<tr>
<td>Manaveli Govt Primary School</td>
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<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alumni of AV schools</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bharathidasan English school - Pondicherry</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public</td>
<td></td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>2124</td>
<td>683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PROJECTS

Community Participation:
Aurovilians (Parents), Educationists, Guests
Mr. Sanjeev (Executive, SAILER, Auroville)
Mr. Sahayaraj, Director, HRC Ravuthan kuppam.
Mr. Daniel, Development officer, HRC
Mr. Vincent Raja (Senior Teacher Aikiyam School, Auroville)
Mr. Moris, Village Action Group, Auroville
Mr. Sri Ram, Bharathidasan School, Pondy
Mr. Manibalan, Pavendar School-Alankuppam
Thirumathy. Chithra, Headmistress, White Angels School, Pondicherry
Mr. Suresh, Head Master, Vijayangali School, Alankuppam
Mr. Venkatesan, Royapettai
Mr. Periyasamy, President, Alankuppam
Mr. Sundara Nayagam - Night School

Schedule of Completion:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project Year</th>
<th>2011</th>
<th>2012</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aug</td>
<td>Sept</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings with ASSET Centre team, students and other science teachers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Project and action plan developed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibits preparation &amp; pilot testing done</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition conducted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation, editing and documentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Project Plan:

#### Science Exhibition Project Plan  
**(August 2011 - March 2012)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Action Item</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>August 2011</td>
<td>Project planning meeting</td>
<td>Purpose of exhibition, incl. target students, teachers and public. Listing out the possible exhibits. Identify project resources (e.g., personnel, hours, material needs). Coordination of exhibition work. Communication/documentation. Follow-up activities after completion of the exhibition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>Discussion with students and teachers</td>
<td>Discussing the possible number of exhibits related to the topics and list out the same. Prepare a procedure key aid for those exhibits.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-Nov.</td>
<td>Collection of materials</td>
<td>As per the exhibit list, collecting the required materials (carried out by students, teachers and ASSET Centre team).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec.</td>
<td>Design and develop exhibits</td>
<td>Using the materials and key aid, design and develop the exhibits (ASSET Centre team, students and teachers were involved in doing this work.). Preparation of text materials related to the exhibits (for the background display, done by ASSET Centre team).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-Feb 2012</td>
<td>Pilot testing</td>
<td>Pilot testing of exhibits done by the ASSET Centre team with the help of students and teachers involved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>Display in the Exhibition place. Evaluation &amp; Documentation</td>
<td>After successful completion of this testing, final display at the exhibition hall (<em>Pavendar English High School, Alankuppam</em>). Feedback from educationists, teachers, students and public. Internal evaluation by ASSET Centre Members.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April end.</td>
<td>Reporting</td>
<td>Preparation of project report</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Evaluation:

We got feedback from educationists, teachers, students & guests who visited to the exhibition and we kept their comments as our asset for the next exhibition. We invited educationists from Auroville and outside to receive their valuable comments. This year three social workers from Pondicherry had come and gave the participation certificate to the students.

### Documentation and Follow-up:

ASSET Centre has documented the exhibition and kept it for reference. We give these exhibits to the participating schools to help in their classroom teaching.
PROJECTS

EXHIBITION CUM CATALOG

**Goal / Objective:**

To create art work with bits and pieces of dress material used by the Mother so that her dress material may be preserved and beauty may manifest in matter.

To put up an exhibition of the art work in order to share it with the community of Auroville and Ashram.

**Program/activity details:**

Since the past ten years I have been working quietly in my little corner, more as a meditation, making artwork with dress material used by the Mother that are by now almost in tatters.

The idea was to preserve them and give them a new life so that so that all those who came in contact with it could still feel Her Presence through them.

Finally an exhibition was organized where people could view them and funds from the sales were raised for Auroville and Ashram.

A catalog of the exhibition in the form of an art-book was published.

**Outcome:**

**Quality -**

All the people who came to the exhibition were deeply moved and felt inspired by the work. I, as the artist grew incredibly through my art work. Through the exhibition I felt very much supported by the community and gained greater confidence and felt more motivated and inspired to continue the work.

**Quantity -**

The community of Auroville and Ashram and many visiting guests felt inspired by the work.
Name of Scheme / Programme:
Integral Education Exploration with Partho

Objective / Outcome:
The project aims to deepen our understanding and practices of integral education so we may better offer to the children of Auroville the education of the future.

Outlay 2010-2011:
We have organized a teacher training with Partho.
A two day workshop for teachers of various Auroville schools was organised during 20 – 21 November 2011 at Verite. Besides the two day workshop, Partho interacted on various occasions with teachers and students from the TLC (The Learning Community).

Outputs:
To conduct a teacher training program that facilitates clarification of Integral Education, in all its different aspects. Exploring how to move from subject teaching to faculty development, the different parts of the being and their development and how it translate in real life situation.

Outcomes:
A great clarity of mind was given to all that was covered. Find below some of the topics discussed during these workshops:

- What is expected from a teacher or a group of teachers who aspire to implement the principles of integral education
- Vital education
- How to develop an Integral school and what are the conditions necessary
- Understanding what is true psychic education
- The end of teaching by snippets
- Moving from subject teaching to faculties development
- Transcending “discipline vs freedom” dilemma
- Learning from other schools in India
- The importance of our own inner progress in order to serve better the children

Participants:
41 teachers from 12 different educational projects in Auroville participated in the workshop.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adriana</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ajay</td>
<td>Aha! Kindergarten</td>
</tr>
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**Process / Timelines:**

Two day workshop held at Verite on the 20 - 21 November 2011
Visit and sharing with teachers from the TLC (The Learning Community)

**Remarks:**

The feedback from the sessions was positive; the following is a comment by one of the participants:

“It is always useful to stop, gather with other people and think about our everyday work, to question the methods and see what needs to be improved. With a teacher as qualified as Partho, a workshop takes another dimension. The self-questioning is very deep and we discussed very high ideals in educating children. Keeping these ideas in mind helps us, as teachers, to be more demanding with ourselves. Partho also gave us some very practical advice.”
BRIEF RESUME: PARTHO

Partho has spent more than fifteen years in the field of integral education and has done extensive personal research in Sri Aurobindo’s educational philosophy and practice. He was educated in Delhi and graduated from Delhi University with honors in English.

After graduation, Partho spent some years in exploring spiritual traditions and meditation, seeking a more comprehensive and meaningful way of life. He joined the Sri Aurobindo Ashram in Delhi at the age of 26 and the Mirambika Free Progress School in the Ashram (Mirambika is an experimental educational unit of the Sri Aurobindo Education Society, New Delhi, and is amongst the first genuinely alternative schools in India that has existed, without dilution or compromise, for nearly 20 years now. It has inspired several other attempts at alternative schooling in the country.). Partho headed Mirambika between 1994 and 1999. During his tenure as principal he was responsible for the academics, management and teacher’s training of the school.

After leaving Mirambika, Partho headed the Blue Mountains School in Ooty for three years. During this time, he also got involved in personal research in alternative pedagogy and curriculum development. Since the beginning of 2001, he has been involved with Sri Aurobindo Foundation for Integral Education and Research. He now heads SAFIER as its director.

Partho conducts seminars and workshops for teachers and school administrators all over the country. He also works as consultant in alternative education to schools and educational institutions in India and abroad.
EDUCATIVE PROGRAMMES REGARDING PREVENTION

Name of Scheme/Programme:
Child Protection Service (CPS)

Objective:
Our objective is to develop ways and methods to create awareness among the children and their families. We work towards a wholesome and better future society. Our main goal towards this education is that the children in our surrounding area become aware of themselves and are prepared against all kinds of abuses such as physical, mental and social.

Outcome:
We have been working with children of different age groups:

11 to 13 years (85 children in two schools, Aikiyam and Edayanchavadi Govt. School), 14 to 18 years (45 children, NESS School)

We had a one-day workshop in Nadukuppam with self-help women’s groups.

We focused mainly on anatomy - in which they learnt about the human body and its functions, how the reproductive system works, in this they became aware of their bodies. From there we moved to protection against different kinds of violence and abuses. We started the class with questions like what is protection? And abuse?

They listed out by themselves the possible answers to the above mentioned topics. After this, different groups chose each topic and discussed among themselves. In this way they learned from each other and sometimes we also added some points.

At times we also followed some materials from Thulir, Chennai, UNICEF
Outputs:

Now that they have understood the importance of these classes, they are also willing to inform other children.

They have become aware of “Children’s Rights”.

They have also become aware of their own freedom and their limits.

During our classes they brought the topics about alcohol and smoking and discussed about it. From there they concluded that these are the main causes for domestic violence and for various problems in the families.

We evaluated their knowledge through a questionnaire at the end of our programme.

Process / Timelines:

We are doing this as a part of the CPS programme. This is an ongoing preventive educational process. So we plan to continue as we do now and to spread to other schools in the future.

Remarks:

This is a great experience for us and the children to share and learn. They have understood how to respect the difference in gender. And to express their child rights.

We received some words from the children.

“I will be aware of myself. I will make my family and friends aware of this child abuse.”

“I request the Government to create an awareness programme for the public and for all the schools”

“Disabled children should be protected.”

These classes are very useful and we like them.
OBJECTIVE:

The main objective is to teach the children through experiments, exploration, mutual learning, and teaching other children. We focused on Science and Maths - which are known to be difficult for rural children to grasp due to various factors. This project proposes to improve the children’s knowledge base and capacity in these important subjects and make them more confident in the next levels of education.

OUTPUTS:

Three resource persons 1. Mr. S. Srinivasan from Arulvazhi Education Centre 2. A. Vinoth Kumar from Auroville Village Action Group and 3. Mr. Manikandan from the local Moratandichavadi village underwent training from 5.3.2012 to 10.3.12 in the Agastya International Foundation. They were guided by Dr. Shibu Shankaran and his assistants in various aspects of the educational tools. They brought with them educational materials from the Agastya International Foundation and explained the various principles underlying the educational tools. Out of the above three, the first two had undergone three days training during last year and this year they gained additional expertise in these subjects.

OUTCOME/PROCESS:

First of all, it was a good educational experience. As Agastya Foundation had done lot of practical research in imparting science education through simple tools to the rural children, the benefits of their experience was available to the trainees without they themselves spending time in inventing such tools. In these experiments, language is not a barrier. As this is the second year of training, they became more aware of the processes by which such tools can be created and the method of explaining them effectively to the children.

REMARKS:

This training programme can be continued for the next year also. Whatever knowledge is gained will be transmitted to other teachers in the school who will become good resource persons.
Name of Scheme / Programme:
Visit and performances of Puppet Theatre KOEKLA from Netherlands.

Objective / Outcome:
All children of Auroville schools had the opportunity to see the performance of “The Little Mook” a piece in Koekla’s repertoire. The exposure to beauty and perfection and promoting of values were the highlights of this event.

Outputs:
“The Little Mook” is an oriental tale by Wilhelm Hauff about a small boy searching for happiness. Through his quest he encounters kindness, magic, deceit and friendship. This tale was offered by Koekla (Christina Boukova and Gillian Dierdrop) in a blend of puppetry and artistic performance framed in beautiful stage decorations and accompanied by sound and light effects.

15 performances were organized for schools in Multi Media Centre for 50-120 children in each performance. In total more than 1000 children saw the piece.

Additionally 4 performances were offered to Auroville community with a full house every time.

Outcomes:
A great chance was offered to Auroville community to enjoy this world class performance. Our Psychic Being got nourished and awakened through this exposure to beauty and perfection.

Values addressed in the play were discussed and explored further in the classrooms with the help of the materials provided by KOEKLA. Children fashioned their own puppets with the templates offered, recreated the story and played it out.
Ideas and tips from Christina were implemented in the school theatre plays.

**Process / Timelines:**

December 2008 and January/February 2009

**Remarks:**

The kids from “Deepam” (a unit working with physically and mentally challenged children) were also invited to see the play. Their enjoyment was extremely touching and beautiful to witness.
Objective/Outcome:

To explore the inner sense of Indian culture and its outer manifestations. To understand what India is, we have to know what Sri Aurobindo says in this respect:

“Mother India is not a piece of earth; she is a power, a Godhead, for all nations have such a Devi supporting their separate existence and keeping it in being. Such beings are as real and more permanently real than the men they influence, but they belong to a higher plane, are part of the cosmic consciousness and being and act here on earth by shaping the human consciousness on which they exercise their influence”....

....”Philosophy and religion are the soul of Indian culture, inseparable from each other and interpenetrative. The whole objective of Indian philosophy, its entire raison d’etre, is knowledge of the spirit, the experience of it and the right to a spiritual existence; its single aim coincides with the highest significance of religion.”

We also know what another great son of India, Jawaharlal Nehru, once said: “India is a geographical entity, a cultural unity in diversity, a bundle of contradictions held together by strong but invisible threads.”

When the Mother was asked “What should be the aim of Indian culture?”

She replied,” India has, or rather had, the knowledge of the Spirit. The aim of her culture should be to manifest the Spirit in Matter, in physical life.”

With the above stated guidelines, we explored what is spirit, mind, life and matter. We are living in times influenced to a great extent by Western ideals and methods. Taking advantage of the discoveries from without and within, we have to march forward..

In this camp, we tried to throw some fundamental questions to the participants, giving facts of life, history, science, and to approach the subject in a scientific spirit.
Through screening of DVDs they were shown:

Life and work of Swami Vivekananda
Life in Sri Aurobindo Ashram
Ramayana, Mahabharata, Avvyar
Freedomfighter, V.O.Chidambaram Pillari etc.

Resource persons gave talks on India featuring topics like unity in diversity in dress and language; geographical features -- how each state has its own unique features and yet forms a single aspiration to be a united India. While people from the north consider their pilgrimage incomplete without a visit to Rameswaram in the south, a visit to Varanasi is essential to complete the pilgrimage of South Indians. All persecuted religions found a safe haven in India. Since the participants of the camp are from Tamil Nadu, the contribution of the Tamils in the grand panorama of Indian Culture was reiterated. Just to give an example, Sri Aurobindo refers to Tirukural as ‘the Gnomic poetry, the greatest in plan, conception and force of execution ever written in this kind”, of Tamil saint,Tiruvalluvar’s poetry

Not to neglect the physical side, this year’s summer camp participants were taken on tour to Chennai where they visited the planetarium, the zoo, etc. They were also given training in basic computer skills. About 50 students participated in the camp, which was held from 4th May to 28th May, 2011.
THE LOOK OF INTEGRAL EDUCATION

Objectives:

The purpose of this project was to increase the understanding of integral education by documenting two classroom examples of integral education through videos from footage taken in Auroville classrooms. We believe it is important for the implementation of integral education to provide actual examples: to make the theoretical real.

We envisioned at least three ways in which these videos would be used:

1. As examples of integral education to post on the Auroville Education portal for public viewing
2. To use for teacher training by showing what can be done in the classroom and how
3. As a means of networking and sharing good practice in integral education between the schools in Auroville.

Process and Outputs:

We captured and pre-edited the footage of six of the projects Margo filmed in 2009 and selected from those two examples of integral education in action - one on Play of Painting and another on portfolio assessment at Transition School with a seventh grade class.

Together with Claire, Christoph edited the material on Play of Painting and created an eleven minute video, which has been uploaded to the internet and integrated on the Education Portal.

http://www.edu.aurovilleportal.org/component/k2/item/144-the-look-of-integraleducation-play-of-painting

A second copy is available on DVD for teachers to view and teacher trainers to use in the Teacher’s Access Centre.
PROJECTS

For the Portfolio Assessment video Christoph filmed a third grade class working on their portfolios to put side by side with the video footage Margo took of older children. A brief spoken introduction was recorded with Paula and the final edited video of 17 minutes has just been made available on DVD and will be uploaded onto the Educational Portal soon. It has already been used to show the students in Mary’s class how other seventh grade students built and evaluated their portfolios.

Process/Timelines:

We began work on this project, with material which had already been shot and roughly edited, in January 2011. The project is now all but finished and Christoph has been reimbursed for his time and the use of his studio.

Remarks:

For future videos we would like to use scenes from the existing videos and shoot new footage to focus on a particular theme, such as:

- Concentration in Different Forms
- The Sandbox or Game of Life
- Building with Blocks
- The Planes of the Being

Also we would like to further explore ways to make use of multimedia, like adding different information on a compilation DVD and make further use of the online Education Portal.